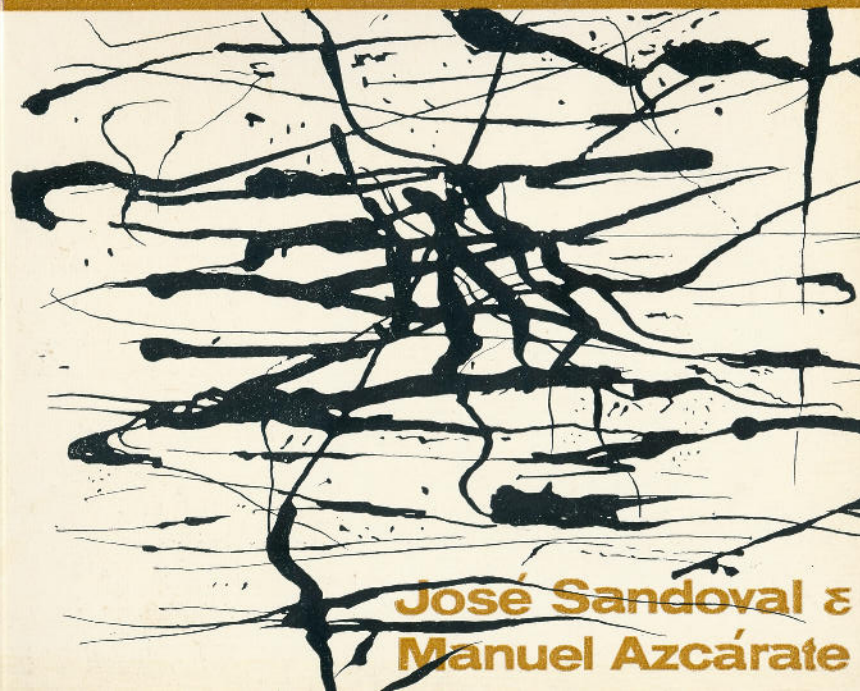


SPAIN

1936-1939



**José Sandoval &
Manuel Azcárate**

Seven shillings & sixpence

SPAIN 1936-1939

José Sandoval

and

Manuel Azcárate

1963

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Foreword

by

Bill Alexander

*formerly Commander of the British Battalion, International
Brigade*

The struggle in Spain from 1936 to 1939 brought a whole generation in Britain into political understanding and activity. Thousands who had not been involved in working-class struggle before, especially young people and professional workers, were roused and took their stand with the Spanish people against fascism.

Today, some recall "the Spain days" with nostalgia; some attempt to rewrite history and so calm the consciences of those who would like to close the book and forget. But the glory of the Spanish people's struggle cannot be tarnished or explained away. The exhilaration and achievement of the defence of Madrid; the tremendous demonstrations demanding "Aid for Spain!" and all the events of the three-year struggle are vivid and real today – because they came from the united will and heroism of men and women.

Young people have the right to know of this episode in history. It is a glorious fact, and what is more it is full of lessons for today. This book, written by two Spanish historians, meets an urgent need and should be widely read both by those who will read it as history and those who will relive experiences.

When the fascist generals started their rebellion against the Spanish Republican Government, one or two British wor-

kers holidaying in Spain very quickly grasped the issues and took up arms side by side with the Spanish people. Immediate understanding and acts of solidarity like this led on to the International Brigades and the world-wide Aid Spain campaign. The first few volunteers were joined by more and more men and women who made their way from Britain to help Spain, overcoming the difficulties of police and authority, passports, money and closed frontiers.

The volunteers in the British Battalion and Medical Services were a cross-section of the whole people of Britain; they came from the great cities, from the industrial and mining areas, from all trades and professions. Though very few in the British Battalion had any previous military training it became a fine military unit. Cromwell once praised the fighting qualities of the Ironside "who knows what he fights for and loves what he knows". So it was with the British Battalion.

Courage and determination had to make up for the shortage of weapons and supplies – a consequence of "Non-Intervention" – though a heavy price was paid in casualties. About 2000 from Britain fought in the International Brigade. Few returned without wounds, 500 gave their lives.

At Jarama, helping to smash Franco's fierce drive to cut off Madrid; in the snows at Teruel; in the assault across the Ebro and in many other battles the British Battalion added fresh glory to our national traditions of struggle for freedom and democracy.

In Britain, in the streets and homes, a mighty solidarity movement, "Aid to Spain", was built up. The support and sympathy for the Spanish people were expressed in gifts of food, milk, clothing, medical supplies and money. Families scrimping on the "dole", pensioners, workers, intellectuals gave from the bottom of their hearts and pockets. The British people showed they knew the truth of the slogan: "Stop the bombs on Barcelona now – save London and Paris!"

It was this strong support which finally compelled the Labour Party leadership, though too late, to abandon their disastrous support for the Tory policy of "Non-Intervention".

The people of Coventry, London and indeed the whole

world paid a heavy price for the Tory reactionary support of fascism, encouraged by its victory in Spain to unleash world war. Many members of the International Brigade who had faced Hitler's and Mussolini's military experts testing their material and techniques in Spain tasted the same Nazi dive-bombers attacking the British Army at Dunkirk and Tobruk.

But Spain's heroic struggle brought home lessons which helped Britain when we finally challenged and fought fascism. The foul character of fascism – its drive to war, its hatred of the working class and of freedom, its cruelty and bestiality – was known and understood. Chamberlain and other Tory helpers of fascism were exposed. The "Spain days" brought a wide understanding and sense of the power of unity and the exhilaration of confidence when people struggle for their future. History shows that the Spanish people and their struggle played a big part in the defeat of Hitler and Mussolini.

To our shame, we did not pay our debt of gratitude and finish off fascism everywhere in 1945. Franco's friends in the U. S. A. and in the Labour Government were allowed to shelter him and help him maintain his dictatorship.

Every day the Franco regime remains it is an active threat to peace and freedom everywhere. It cannot be ignored and forgotten.

After Franco's military victory he tried to consolidate his hold by savage and bloody repression – murdering and imprisoning all who had stood for democracy. But despite this the spirit of the Spanish people has never been broken. Always there are new reports of arrests, tortures and trials as the young people, students, peasants and workers, of all political views, struggle so that Spain shall once again move forward – a progressive, free nation. This is the real face of Spain; the people have not changed.

In Britain we must not change. Every protest at the misdeeds of the Franco fascist rule helps the growing forces in Spain working for liberty. The dangers of war and fascist reaction which brought our peoples together in the past have not been ended; common interest demands that we struggle together for the future of peace and democracy.

The background

The years have not extinguished the flame of solidarity lit by the war in Spain. And many of the complex problems that the Spanish people had to tackle in their armed struggle against fascism are still vital problems of the present day. This is what has prompted us to write these pages.

We have not attempted to produce a complete history of the war in Spain; such an undertaking could not be compressed into a book of this size. Nor will the reader find a complete analysis of the economic, social, political, military and other factors that were operating and the events that occurred in the territory of the Spanish Republic between 1936 and 1939.

Our pretensions are more modest. We have singled out certain moments and aspects of the war which exercised the greatest influence on the course of events. We have limited ourselves to these, guided above all by the desire to *explain* how it came about that the Spanish people were able to wage the epic struggle of their national revolutionary war, and why it was that, after three years of resistance, they were defeated.

*

Before embarking on the subject of the war itself, we feel we should give our readers some background information about the situation in Spain in the period which preceded the outbreak of the rebellion, so that they may have a better understanding of its causes.

Between 1923 and 1929, Spain had lived under the military dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera.

Closely associated with Mussolini, whose fascist system he attempted to impose on Spain, Primo de Rivera, with the connivance of King Alfonso XIII, set aside the Constitution of the monarchy, suppressed the Parliament and ended up by trying to establish a "Corporate Chamber" on the Italian model.

His attempts to form a fascist party, called "The Patriotic Union", were a complete fiasco. Primo de Rivera won the support of a section of the leadership of the Spanish Socialist Party (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*) but even this was not enough to save him. The whole country demonstrated its opposition to his dictatorship.

The King tried to save the monarchy by getting rid of the dictator, but it was too late.

To clear up the political situation, the last government of the monarchy held municipal elections. The people turned these elections into a plebiscite against the monarchy. Inspired by their electoral victory, the masses of the people went out on to the streets and peacefully proclaimed the Republic on April 14, 1931. The King and the royal family were obliged to leave Spain.

*

The revolution of 1931 wrested power from the hands of the bloc of landowning aristocracy and big bourgeoisie which had been ruling Spain for over half a century.

It was a time when great opportunities were wasted. In those moments of popular enthusiasm the rulers of the Republic could comparatively easily have attacked the economic power of the reactionaries and deprived them of the positions which they held in the state apparatus, the army and so on. But they did not do so.

The Republican leaders, typified by Azaña, were fond of quoting Robespierre, Danton and Saint-Just. But this was so much verbiage. When it came to deeds they were far from being Jacobins. They were incapable of leading the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the Spain of 1931. They left the field

open to a vigorous and powerful Gironde, and a Vendée* that was ready to revolt at any moment against the Republic.

In the government the Socialist leaders collaborated with the Republicans. Far from ensuring working-class leadership for the revolution, they trailed behind the bourgeoisie.

Reacting against this reformist policy, many Spanish workers with a revolutionary outlook came under the influence and leadership of the Anarchists, who squandered the energy of the working class in *putsches* and irresponsible actions, from which the reactionaries profited.

During the period of Republican-Socialist government, from 1931 to 1933, not a single one of the major problems of the democratic revolution was solved.

No agrarian reform was carried out; the countryside remained a festering ulcer on the body of the nation. Spain was the only country in Europe where the landowning aristocracy monopolised the greater part of the land suitable for cultivation.

The Duke of Medinaceli owned 79,147 hectares of land. (One hectare equals about 2½ acres). The Duke of Peñaranda owned 51,016 hectares. The Duke of Villahermosa owned 47,203 hectares; the Duke of Alba 34,455 hectares; the Marquis of La Romana, 29,095; the Marquis of Comillas, 23,720, and so on.

Millions of day-labourers and peasants lived in semi-feudal conditions under their domination.

Morocco remained under Spanish colonial rule. The right to self-determination was not granted to Catalonia, Euzkadi (the Basque Country) and Galicia. The monarchy's state apparatus remained almost intact.

Hitler's victory in Germany in 1933 encouraged the aggressive tendencies of Spanish reaction. Hitler's reign of terror and the bloodthirsty methods of Nazism fitted in perfectly with the cruelty and savagery of Spain's reactionary castes.

Primo de Rivera's son, the founder of the Falange, went to

* An allusion to the Vendée uprising of landlords, clergy and Girondists during the French revolution.

Germany to study the Nazis' system of organisation and their methods of violence, which were soon to be tried out in Spain. He gave his followers the slogan: "The only argument we understand is that of the pistol!" And Communists, Socialists and moderate Republicans, workers and judges, military men and journalists met their death from fascist bullets.

Yet neither demagoguery nor terror could transform the Falange into a mass party. It was repudiated by the whole people, by all decent people.

The main forces of Spanish reaction sought to gain power by other means, using ostensibly legal channels. For this they relied principally on the *Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas* (CEDA), the clerical-fascist party led by the lawyer Gil Robles.

Towards the end of 1933 Socialists and Left Republicans were removed from the government, and the Radical Party – the most corrupt section of Republicanism – formed a transitional government, the task of which was to prepare for the open seizure of the leadership of the Republic by reaction. In October 1934 the CEDA entered the government. This was the first step towards the establishment of a fascist-type dictatorship in Spain.

The people's reply was not long in coming.

Changes – both quantitative and qualitative – had been taking place in the working-class movement since 1931. The Communist Party, having overcome certain sectarian tendencies that had hitherto held back its development, was playing an increasingly important role. Its unremitting efforts to build the unity of the working class and the unity of the people in face of the fascist menace were making headway among the masses of the people and within the Socialist Party itself.

The Socialist Party was undergoing a serious crisis. Its membership was declining. Its representation in parliament had been reduced by half. The openly reformist tendencies of Besteiro, who advocated an understanding with fascist reaction, were defeated. And, under pressure from the rank and file, Largo Caballero and the majority of the Socialist

leaders took up a militant stand against fascism. This made it possible, in 1934, for the two working-class parties to reach an agreement which, although it was still only precarious, was nevertheless the first step on the road to that unity without which it would have been impossible to stop the fascist avalanche that threatened Spain.

The heroic struggle of the Austrian workers in February 1934, the struggle of the French people against the threat of fascism and the successes in France of the Popular Front, which was defended by the French Communist Party, were an example and a tremendous help to the Spanish workers and democrats.

In October 1934, when the reactionaries made an attempt to impose fascism in Spain without striking a blow, the working class, led by the Socialist and Communist Parties, rose up, and a general strike broke out, which in Asturias took the form of an armed insurrection. The workers in Asturias took power and held out for two weeks against the Moorish troops and the forces of the Foreign Legion brought from Morocco to crush them. This punitive operation was directed from the Ministry of War by General Franco.

The uprising in Asturias, although lack of organisation and co-ordination led to its defeat, prevented the successful accomplishment of the reactionaries' plans and laid the basis for the formation of the People's Front.

The struggles of October 1934 taught the workers that the unity of the working class was the decisive factor, and showed them the overriding necessity to unite all the democratic forces around the working class for the struggle against fascism.

These events also made abundantly clear the fateful consequences for Spanish democracy of the colonialist policy carried out by the Republic in Morocco. By their refusal to grant independence to Morocco, the Republican-Socialist governments had facilitated the formation there of an ultra-reactionary shock force – under the direct command of the so-called "African" generals, such as Franco, Mola, Valera and Sanjurjo – which in its daily clashes with the Moroccan

patriots was preparing itself, both from the moral and practical points of view, for the subsequent struggle against the Spanish people. This shock force, created by the colonialist policy, was the instrument which enabled the Spanish reactionaries to smash the people's movement in 1934; it later became the main instrument of the military-fascist rebellion in 1936.

*

Two months after the end of the fighting in Asturias, on the initiative of the Spanish Communist Party – in conditions of illegality which made its work more difficult – a co-ordinating committee was formed between the leadships of the two working-class parties.

Spurred on, above all, by the great aim of securing an amnesty for the 30,000 political prisoners jailed after the events of October 1934, working-class and democratic unity advanced with great strides.

The experience in Spain, together with that in France, was of the greatest importance in working out the policy of the united front and the People's Front at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International, which was a great turning point in the history of the world Communist movement.

The proposal to form a People's Front was put forward by the Spanish Communist Party in May 1935. Its rejection by the Socialist Party and the leading Republican parties prevented the formation of the People's Front on a national scale. Nevertheless, even at this stage, local People's Front committees and other united groupings were set up in many places in Spain.

The growth of unity greatly increased the energy of the working people. Mass pressure forced the resignation of the reactionary government and the holding of a general election. This made unity of the democratic forces a compelling necessity and speeded up the formation of the People's Front.

On January 15, 1936, the People's Front Pact was signed between the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, the Republican Left (led by Azaña), the Republican Union (Martínez

Barrio), the Socialist Youth, the UGT (General Workers' Union) and some small political groups.

On February 16 the People's Front won an overwhelming victory in the general election. The Right and Centre parties lost 148 seats to the Left-wing coalition. In the new Cortes (parliament) the parties of the People's Front had 269 deputies out of a total of 480.

In this period the Spanish working class achieved outstanding successes in the sphere of unity. In December 1935 the trade unions under Communist influence were integrated in the UGT (the national trade union federation traditionally led by the Socialists). In April 1936 the Socialist and Communist youth movements merged in the United Socialist Youth (JSU). And in July of the same year, four working-class parties in Catalonia merged to form the united party of the working class - United Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSUC).

*

The triumph of the People's Front opened the way for the democratic development of the Spanish Republic by peaceful and parliamentary means.

The reactionaries, who were seeking to turn back the wheel of Spanish history, did not accept this prospect. In order to gain their own ends they were prepared to use every weapon they could - violence, civil war and the opening of their country's gates to foreign military intervention.

From then on, the financial and landowning oligarchy, discarding the CEDA because of its defeat in the elections, employed the group of "African" generals as its main instrument in the conspiracy against the Republic.

Following the victory of the People's Front, a government was formed consisting exclusively of Republicans, without either Socialists or Communists. The blindness of Republican leaders like Azaña and Casares Quiroga allowed many of the fascist generals, who were already engaged in conspiracy, to retain key posts in the army. The government appointed Franco military commander of the Canary Isles - very close to Morocco. Mola was made military governor of Pamplona,

the main stronghold of the Carlists*; Goded became military commander of the Balearic Islands, and so on.

In contact with fascist political groupings such as the Falange and the Renovación Española (whose chief was Calvo Sotelo, one-time collaborator of the dictator Primo de Rivera), these generals hastened their preparations for rebellion.

The brief experience of the Republic had made it clear that the financial and landowning oligarchy and its "African" generals could not overthrow Spanish democracy by their own unaided efforts. On a purely national level, democracy in Spain was stronger than reaction and fascism.

But Spanish reaction was not acting alone. It had close contacts with Mussolini and Hitler. Already in 1934 the first agreement had been signed in Rome whereby Mussolini had promised to send arms and financial aid to the forces of the extreme Right in Spain. In that period the visits of fascists and reactionary leaders to Berlin and Rome became much more frequent.

In March 1936, following the victory of the People's Front, General Sanjurjo and José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the leader of the Falange, went to Berlin to finalise the details of foreign armed intervention against the Republic.

Hitler and Mussolini, having embarked on their policy of expansion in Europe and the Mediterranean, had a vital interest in the establishment of a government in Spain which would submit to their wishes.

From the Spanish coast and the islands of Spain it would be possible to threaten and cut the vital sea routes linking Britain and France with their colonies. By taking up a position on the Pyrenees, Germany would be able to threaten France from the rear and practically encircle her on land.

In the economic sphere, Hitler coveted Spain's mineral resources, which he needed to overcome the serious deficiencies from which his arms industry was suffering.

Then, too, the victory of the People's Front in Spain

* Supporters of absolute monarchy, strongly Catholic, with a foothold in the backward agricultural areas of Navarre.

had tremendous international repercussions. Three months later, in May, the Popular Front had triumphed in France. Spain and France became a shining example to all peoples threatened by fascism.

If the Popular Front were really consolidated in France and Spain, this would create a firm bulwark of peace and democracy in South-West Europe and a balance of forces in Europe that would shift in favour of peace and democracy.

Hitler and Mussolini wanted to prevent this at all costs. Moreover, they were not the only ones engaged in helping the fascist conspirators.

The American, British and French imperialists were encouraging Hitler's bellicose plans in the hope that fascist aggression would be directed against the Soviet Union.

Thus, despite the contradictions existing between them and the German and Italian imperialists, the United States, British and French imperialists helped those who were preparing to take up arms – under the leadership of Hitler and Mussolini – against the Spanish Republic.

The British oil magnate Sir Henry Deterding is said to have placed a considerable sum of money at Franco's disposal. The American Colonel Sosthenes T. Behn, director of the *Telefónica* (the National Telephone Company of Spain, formed with U. S. capital and having the monopoly of the telephone service) and one of Morgan's right hand men, was in touch with Franco from 1934 onwards and offered him financial help for his plot against the Republic. The United States oil companies were in close contact with the future rebels, and so on and so forth.

The big bourgeoisie in France, which had been forced to make great concessions to the workers when the Popular Front government led by the socialist Léon Blum was formed, regarded the military fascist uprising against the Spanish Republic as a means of undermining the French Popular Front and getting their own back.

Because of this French big business, too, made large financial contributions to the plotters who were scheming in Spain and gave them every kind of support.

The military fascist plot against the Spanish Republic, then, was not a purely Spanish affair. It was an essential part of the German and Italian plan for preparing war against other peoples. And it was an attack by international imperialism against the People's Front in Spain and France, against the cause of peace and against the whole democratic movement.

*

Was there a possibility, after the victory of the People's Front in February 1936, of preventing the outbreak of civil war? Yes, such a possibility did exist. And the policy of the Communist Party was directed precisely to this end – to prevent civil war and ensure the peaceful development of democracy. This could only have been achieved, however, if the People's Front programme had been operated energetically and consistently, carrying through the democratic revolution, attacking reaction at its economic base and depriving it of its positions in the army and the state machine, thereby smashing the fascist military plot that was extending its ramifications all over Spain.

Day after day, in meetings, in the press, in parliament and by direct approach to the Republican authorities, the Communists denounced the conspirator generals by name, beginning with Franco, and demanded their dismissal and the banning of the fascist organisations. But the government paid no heed, and the financial and landowning oligarchy and the "African" generals were able without let or hindrance to prepare the civil war, which was – as history showed – Act One of the Second World War.

The Communist Party did not confine itself to denouncing the plotters. It carried on a constant and intensive work of political explanation, mass organisation, and the strengthening of working-class and anti-fascist unity for the defence of democracy and the Republic.

Challenging the Socialist and Republican leaders who looked on the People's Front as a mere electoral agreement and proposed its dissolution once the elections were over, the Communist Party demanded that the People's Front should

be transformed into a powerful and active movement of unity and organisation among the broadest masses of the people.

"Not a single village without a People's Front!" – this slogan issued by the Communists was grasped by the people and was being turned into reality. The policy of the Communist Party won agreement and support among ever widening sections.

The Party became the strongest political party of the Spanish Left. In February 1936 it had a membership of 30,000. By July this had grown to 107,000, while the Socialist Party had no more than 59,800 members at that time.

It was due mainly to the Communist Party's correct policy of anti-fascist unity – a policy which the mass of the people adopted as their own – and to the existence of a strong Communist Party and a broad People's Front movement, that the Spanish people were able to confront the fascist insurrection with the strong wall of their unity, courage and determination.

2

The first battles

By mid-July 1936 the preparations for the fascist insurrection, which had been going on for many months, were complete.

The "African" generals had shared out their respective roles. Sanjurjo, Mola, Franco, Goded, Fanjul, Cabanellas, Quiapo de Llano and Colonel Aranda were to figure as leaders of the revolt.

The preparatory manoeuvres of the Moroccan army ended on July 12. While these had been going on, several secret meetings had been held at the military camp at Llano Amarillo between leaders and officers involved in the conspiracy in order to settle the final details of the rebellion in the Spanish zone of the Moroccan Protectorate.

On July 16, Mola informed the other leaders involved in the conspiracy that the revolt would start in consecutive stages on July 18, 19 and 20.

The officers stationed at Melilla, imagining that the plot had been discovered, acted prematurely. They brought their troops out on to the streets early in the afternoon of July 17. The rebellion had begun.

The first units sent into action by the insurgents consisted mainly of troops who were not Spaniards. They included the colonial mercenaries of six *banderas** of the Foreign Legion,

* *bandera*: a battalion consisting of one machine gun company and three rifle companies – 600 men.

stationed in various parts of the Spanish zone of the Protectorate; the Moorish troops of the five *tabors** of Native Regulars; the *mehallas*** of the Riff, Gomera and Larache; and some squadrons of Moorish cavalry.

The rebels utilised these colonial troops as their shock force for carrying out the military coup in Morocco and for exporting counterrevolution and war to Spanish soil.

Using these troops, the insurgents rapidly took control of Melilla, occupied Ceuta, Tetuán and Larache, launched an attack on Cádiz and supported Quicpo de Llano's rising in Seville.

At Melilla, Ceuta and Tetuán the Spanish workers attempted to resist the rebellion and called a general strike; but their isolated centres of resistance were brutally smashed. Officers and leaders who remained loyal to the Republic were put to death. A terrible man-hunt began; trade union and other workers' leaders, prominent democrats and Republicans were arrested and shot out of hand. From its very outset the "Movement of Salvation" became an outburst of hideous crime and vile betrayals of the country.

The initial resistance having been crushed in the Spanish zone of Morocco, Franco went there from the Canary Isles. He flew in a British plane that had left Croydon on July 11, piloted by a British airman, Captain Bebb, who was accompanied by Commander Hugh C. B. Pollard, a "weapons expert" from Scotland Yard.*** Franco subsequently conferred decorations on both men for this service.

With the uprising triumphant in Morocco, the rebel generals were able to send out the pre-arranged code-signal for the military revolt of their fellow-conspirators in Spain: "*En toda España el cielo está despejado*". (Clear skies all over Spain).

And forthwith the Spanish sky was filled with dark thunder-

* *tabor*: a unit of 225 men - Moroccan troops with mixed cadres.

** *mehalla*: a unit of about 1000 men.

*** Capt. Bebb described this flight in the *News Chronicle*, November 7, 1936. Translator's note.

clouds. There began a tempest of blood and fire which was to last for three years and which was to spread death and destruction throughout the country.

Blindness and Treachery

Up to the very last moment the Republicans who formed the government refused to believe that the generals would rise up against the Republic.

Both Casares Quiroga, the Prime Minister, and Manuel Azaña, the President of the Republic, put more faith in the hypocritical protestations of loyalty constantly reiterated by Franco, Mola, Cabanellas, Aranda and their accomplices, than in the repeated and sometimes dramatic warnings given by the Communist Party and other sections of the People's Front against the web of conspiracy that was taking shape.

When a delegation from the Communist Party leadership went to the Prime Minister, with positive proof of Mola's subversive activities in Navarre, Casares Quiroga retorted that the Communists "saw Fascists everywhere".

The writer M. D. Benavides has described how the Prime Minister was fond of quoting, in reply to those who warned him of the coming danger: "*Que Messieurs les Anglais tirent les premiers...*" And he would add: "As long as the army does not revolt, I have no grounds for interfering with it."

Azaña went even further: "I am so sick of all this talk about military uprisings that I am tempted to appoint Yagüe* chief of my military household".

The "African" generals took advantage of this political stupidity on the part of the Republican leaders and carried hypocrisy to its extreme limits.

When Manuel Azaña was elected President of the Republic in May 1936, the first to pay their respects to him and pledge

* Yagüe, Lieutenant-Colonel of the Spanish Foreign Legion at the outbreak of the rebellion. During the Spanish war he was in command of all the Moorish troops.

their support were Generals Franco, Goded, Cabanellas and Quiapo de Llano, Colonel Aranda and others, all of whom were involved in the plot against the Republic.

The letter which Franco sent to the Minister of War in the Republican government a few days before the uprising is a model of duplicity and dissimulation: "Those who say the army is opposed to the Republic are lying", wrote the traitor General. "You are being deceived by people who invent plots out of their own murky passions. Those who misrepresent the anxiety, dignity and patriotism of the officers as signs of conspiracy and disaffection are rendering the country a very poor service."

At the very time when he wrote this, Franco was receiving and transmitting instructions to the other generals involved in the plot; he was up to the neck in intrigue and conspiracy.

The rest of the military leaders displayed the same shameless hypocrisy. General Mola paraded his punctilious sense of honour as a soldier and in his book *Lo que yo supe* ("What I Knew") reproached the Republic for not appreciating the "loyalty of the military men" who "maintained a blind obedience to the legal and constitutional authority, whatever its nature." On July 16, Mola gave General Batet his *word of honour* that he would not rebel. Two days later he rebelled against the "legal and constitutional authority", and arrested Batet.

On July 18, Generals Capaz and Cabanellas solemnly reaffirmed their support for the Prime Minister – and went straight off to join the rebels.

At San Sebastian, the military men involved in the fascist conspiracy swore an oath of loyalty to the Republic; but directly the people, reassured, had relaxed their vigilance, these same men broke their word and joined the revolt.

Much the same was done by Colonel Aranda at Oviedo, Pinilla at Gijón, Martín Alonso at Corunna and many, many others. They used their "word of honour" as a figleaf to hide their betrayal of the Republic.

Relying on the "African" generals' protestations of loyalty,

the Republican rulers sank into a peaceful slumber – from which they were rudely awakened by the uproar when the swashbucklers came out into the streets.

Even then they refused to take the uprising seriously, regarding it as just another *pronunciamiento* that could be settled overnight by a few telephone calls.

Unfortunately, it took them a long time to realise their tragic mistake. What had happened on July 17, 1936, was by no means a typical Spanish *pronunciamiento*; it marked the beginning of a military rebellion, carefully and treacherously prepared by the financial and landowning oligarchy and the "African" generals, supported by two fascist states – Germany and Italy – and by international monopoly capital.

That military rebellion left the Republican state crippled and defenceless. With a large part of the army in open revolt and with the armed forces in general undermined by treachery, indecision or distrust, every single unit constituted an unknown factor for the government, which was horrified at the defection of the generals on whom it had heaped commands, honour and power.

Arms for the People

In face of this catastrophic collapse of the Republican edifice, there was only one road to salvation – to arm the people.

Around this question – the crucial one at that time – a political struggle developed which was as tense and dramatic as that being waged in the streets between loyalists and traitors, democrats and fascists.

The fascist generals, who were themselves ruthlessly breaking the law and violating their oaths, were confident that the legalistic obsession from which the rulers of the Second Republic suffered would prevent them from arming the people. Up to the very last moment, with a zeal worthy of a better cause, Casares Quiroga maintained his refusal to distribute arms to the people, who at that time were the only possible defenders of the Republican institutions.

Fortunately the working class refused to commit the collective suicide wished on it by the government. Immediately the news of the uprising in Morocco reached Madrid, huge demonstrations poured on to the streets, assuring the government of the people's loyalty and demanding weapons. On the same day the Communist Party sent a deputation to present an identical request to Casares Quiroga. On the following day – July 18 – a delegation representing the People's Front saw the Prime Minister and demanded that arms be given to the people. By that time, all the measures taken by the government had failed and the rebellion was spreading through Spain like wildfire, destroying laws, institutions, lives and cities. Casares Quiroga gave in.

"Gentlemen, I will arrange for the distribution of the few arms we have at our disposal. But I am resigning."

Shortly afterwards, as the clock in the old tower of the Ministry of the Interior was tolling the twelve strokes of a wakeful midnight, Dolores Ibárruri was able to broadcast over the Madrid radio this message of encouragement and call to action:

"Workers! The government has placed in our hands the necessary means of defence. Be ready for action!... Every worker, every anti-fascist must regard himself as a mobilised soldier. Take your place in the struggle. Fascism shall not pass!"

But President Azaña was to make one more desperate effort to prevent the arming of the people.

At 3 a. m., with the evident intention of coming to terms with the rebels, he entrusted Martínez Barrio, leader of the Republican Union and representative of one of the most lukewarm sections of the Republican movement, with the task of forming a government.

Mass demonstrations led by the Communists and Socialists manifested the people's firm opposition to any plan for capitulation. Thanks to their fighting spirit, that government was stillborn.

On July 20 a new government took over, headed by José Giral. At long last the provincial and local authorities received

permission to arm the people. How much bloodshed Spain would have been spared if that had been achieved three days sooner!

It was a bitter lesson, and one that needs to be learned. When every moment was precious, those three days of vacillation and faint-heartedness on the part of the government were utilised by the fascist military men to seize twenty-three towns. In at least ten of these, bloody struggles took place, showing that the working class, the peasants and the ordinary people as a whole were resolved not to yield without a fight.

But it was in vain that the workers, gathered at their trade union headquarters and picketing the military barracks, clamoured for weapons. In vain the peasants and farm-workers from neighbouring areas streamed into the towns, prepared to give their lives to defend the Republic. The authorities refused to hand out the weapons, or else grudgingly released a few, unpardonably late. It is said that a leading city official in Corunna was heard lamenting in this strain when the rebels were about to attack the local government offices: "If we arm the people now, who will hold them in check later? And if we don't, what will become of the Republic?"*

Caught between hammer and anvil by their own class limitations, powerless to resolve the Shakespearian dilemma they had created for themselves, the Republican officials wasted valuable time. The people paid for it very dearly with their own blood.

Giral's instructions to release the weapons arrived far too late in many instances. The final sparks of a glorious resistance had been extinguished by the fascists in Corunna, El Ferrol and Vigo; in Cádiz and Seville the last fighters in an unequal battle were falling amid the ruins of the barricades around the Carraca arsenal and in the working-class quarters of Triana and La Macarena.

In those places where the working-class organisations took

* *Lo que han hecho en Galicia* ("What they Did in Galicia"), page 196, published in Havana, 1938.

desperate measures to obtain weapons without waiting for an end to the fatal vacillations of Azaña and Casares Quiroga, things turned out differently.

In Barcelona the workers got their hands on several hundred carbines stored on the steamships "Uruguay" and "Marqués de Comillas".

In Madrid the workers' organisations received valuable help from a number of patriotic army officers who, outraged by the "African" insurrection and by the vacillations of the authorities, handed over hundreds of rifles to the working-class headquarters.

With these pitifully few weapons, and some additional ones seized in daring raids on gunsmiths' shops, the workers of Madrid, Barcelona and other towns went into their first engagements with the rebels in those ominous days of July, while the military conspiracy, like a malignant growth, was spreading throughout Spain.

The People's Reply

The greatest fascist danger-spot in Madrid was the Montaña Barracks.

On Sunday, July 19, the troops there noticed with anxiety that the barracks was filling up with strangers, young civilian fascists who immediately received uniforms and weapons. At midday the fascist General Fanjul arrived, also in civilian clothing.

After making a feeble speech, Fanjul issued a proclamation declaring a state of war in Madrid. Nevertheless, he did not dare to send his troops out into the streets, where the Madrid workers were carefully watching every move the military men made.

Groups of workers, Communist and Socialist party members and members of the CNT (*Confederacion Nacional de Trabajo*, a trade union federation with Anarchist tendencies), young lads of the Socialist Youth and the Workers' and Peasants' Anti-Fascist Militia, were posted at corners, in trees and behind

low walls. The barracks was besieged. The presence of angry crowds led Fanjul to adopt the prudent tactics of confining his rebellion to the inside of the barracks, in spite of the old military maxim: "*Plaza sitiada, plaza tomada*" (A stronghold besieged is a stronghold captured).

Meanwhile the people went over to the offensive. Detachments of armed civilians, Assault Guards, Civil Guards and loyal troops, with magnificent audacity and heroism, were capturing the barracks at Getafe, Campamento and Vicálvaro.

At dawn the next day the attack on the Montaña Barracks began.

The triumphant arrival of two field-guns, with their attendant crowds of eager youngsters and sight-seers, redoubled the enthusiasm of the attacking forces, which reached new heights when two loyalist aircraft appeared. Heartened by their presence, the besiegers went into the attack. By noon the gates of the fascist stronghold were broken down. Madrid had stormed her Bastille.

At the same hour of noon, the people of Barcelona captured the Atarazanas Barracks, the last rebel stronghold in the Catalan capital.

Rebel military units had marched into the streets of Barcelona at dawn on July 19. From Pedralbes Barracks they had advanced on the Plaza España, the Plaza de la Universidad and the Plaza de Cataluña, taking up positions in the Telephone Exchange, the Hotel Colón and other buildings.

Assault Guards and Civil Guards who, like those in Madrid, remained loyal to the Republic, were the first to open fire on the insurgents. The workers struck the final blow and smashed the uprising.

By dusk, the rebels had lost all hope. The people of Barcelona had driven them out of practically every place they had occupied early that morning. Generals Goded and Burriel, the leaders of the uprising, surrendered at the Capitanía, which was taken by Communists and members of the United Socialist Youth. By the morning of the following day, with the capture of Atarazanas and Maestranza, the rebel attempt had ended in the great Mediterranean port.

Elsewhere in Spain civil war was raging. In Asturias the workers had surrounded the barracks of Simancas and El Coto in Gijón. The miners were besieging Oviedo. Columns of men from Santander went out to Villasanta, Peña Labre and Quintanilla de la Torres.

The workers of the Basque Country routed the insurgents at the Basurto Barracks in Bilbao, put down the fascists in San Sebastián and marched on Vitoria.

In Galicia, workers, peasants and fishermen, unarmed and defenceless, were waging a desperate struggle against a ruthless enemy.

The newly-born People's Militia in Madrid pushed quickly towards Alcalá de Henares, advanced on Sigüenza and dug themselves in right on the provincial boundary of Aragon. Other columns forced Moscardó's troops in Toledo to take refuge in the Alcazar.

The battle raged on the rocky crags of Guadarrama; Mola's forces were trying in vain to open the way to Madrid. At Palencia and Logroño, Huesca and Teruel, Valladolid, Zamora and Salamanca railwaymen, bakers and bricklayers, armed only with their courage, made every workers club a fortress where they battled and died for democracy.

As the people's columns went marching out across the fields of Aragón, a life-and-death struggle was being waged in Cádiz and Seville by workers and Republican soldiers.

At the seaplane base of Cartagena the insurrection was smashed and the fleet remained in Republican hands. The people had won the day in Málaga, and they were sending their detachments towards La Línea. Andalusian farm workers, carrying shotguns, liberated Guadix and advanced right up to the walls of Granada.

Against this bastion of the people's determination the fascist insurrection smashed itself to pieces. A people's uprising on an amazing scale had answered the fascists. Men and women left their daily tasks and threw themselves into the struggle with whatever weapon chance or courage put into their hands. A rifle obtained in an attack on a barracks, a sporting gun, a pistol snatched from some fascist, even an

ancient arquebus taken from some collection of antique weapons – these were the people's armaments in that hour.

Peasants and farm workers undertook the defence of the people's lives and possessions in the countryside; they patrolled roads, set guards at the entrance to every village and every bridge. The whole of working Spain became a veritable hive of anonymous "Mayors of Móstoles".*

This was the romantic stage of the Spanish War, when the vast mass of the people saved the Republic which was then in mortal danger, making up for the shortage of weapons and the absence of military training with torrents of blood and valour, filling with their heroism and drive the void created by the vacillations and panic of the authorities.

Unity in the Anti-Fascist Fight

Communists, Socialists, members of the CNT, Republicans, Catalan Nationalists and Basque Catholics, along with thousands of other Spaniards who had no political credentials except their burning anti-fascism, joined their efforts and shed their blood together in order to save the Republic.

Underlying the stamp of spontaneity which everything bore in those first days, beneath the seeming chaos of unco-ordinated actions, clear evidence could be found of a surprising unanimity of purpose and will that could only be the work of the People's Front organisations.

It is worth while analysing some aspects of the political activities of the Spanish Communist Party, which made such a great contribution to this remarkable state of mind of the masses of the people.

* On May 2, 1808, when French troops had occupied Madrid, the people – unarmed and without instructions – rose up spontaneously against the invaders. Towards evening the Mayor of a little municipality on the city's outskirts, Móstoles, sent a message to the Mayor of a neighbouring district proclaiming that the country was in danger and calling on all Spaniards to aid Madrid.

First of all, it was the Spanish Communist Party that had shown the greatest vehemence, energy and perseverance in putting the nation on guard against the treason which the reactionaries had been plotting behind closed doors. For, unfortunately, it had not only been the Republican authorities who had displayed a heedless attitude. The Anarchist leaders at that time abandoned themselves to an orgy of strikes which fitted in perfectly with the atmosphere of tension that the reactionaries so ardently desired; it was clear that the Anarchist leaders neither believed in the uprising that was being prepared nor were they taking any serious thought about how to meet it.

Nor can it be said that the Socialist leaders – with the exception of Indalecio Prieto and perhaps a few others – showed any greater perspicacity or vigilance. For proof of this we need look no further than the prominent socialist Julián Zugazagoitia, who was editor at that time of the main Socialist Party newspaper. In his history of the Spanish war, he wrote: "When Prieto publicly and solemnly warned his Socialist colleagues of the extremely grave danger that lay ahead, they interrupted him with the never-to-be-forgotten retort: 'Bah! Old wives' tales!'"

The efforts of the Communist Party in the period prior to the uprising helped to transform indifference into vigilance and alertness and to bring about the rapid mobilisation of the working class and of the masses of the people as a whole in defence of the Republican institutions.

And the reason why this mass mobilisation, from the very first moment, took shape in units which were organised to a greater or lesser degree but were in any case ready for armed struggle, was primarily because of the existence of the Workers' and Peasants' Anti-Fascist Militia, formed long before on the initiative of the Communist Party. From 1933, when the menace of fascism had first become apparent in Spain, the Party – in the teeth of the indifference, sarcasm and accusations of the other working-class and democratic organisations – had stressed the need to create a militia for the defence of the people against fascist attack, and had taken the

initiative in forming that militia. This example was later followed by the Socialist Youth.

At the beginning of the uprising the Workers' and Peasants' Anti-Fascist Militia and the Socialist Militia played a decisive part in organising the people for armed struggle.

Another aspect of the Communist Party's activity, the scope of which showed itself very clearly in those days, was its political work among the members of the armed forces and the attention which it had persistently paid to the army.

The result of this work was shown by the formation of the Anti-Fascist Republican Military Union, in which democratic commanders and officers were grouped, and by the organisation of groups or committees of other ranks in the barracks. These organisations helped to defeat the fascist insurrection in some units, among them being the 6th Infantry Regiment in Madrid.

However, the decisive sphere of the Communist Party's work, when the time came to stand up to the fascist attack, was that of unity.

Would that great common front of different classes and nationalities have been possible without the policy of the People's Front? Would that agreement among Communists, Socialists and Anarchists have been conceivable without the Communist Party's long struggle for working-class unity?

The stand taken by the masses of the people and by the vast majority of the workers' leaders when the rebellion broke out was the rich harvest of the long years during which the seeds of unity had been sown. When danger struck, everything that might create disunity was set aside.

Already, when the rebellion was imminent, the leaders of the Communist Party, the Socialist Party, the United Socialist Youth and the UGT had met in Madrid, on June 13, 1936, with the aim of warning the people and offering the government their aid against the enemies of the regime.

On July 18, when news came of the military rising in Morocco, the leading committees of the Communist and Socialist Parties issued a joint statement mobilising all their members:

"Summon up your courage for the approaching fight to which you may be called at any moment. When the order is given, rush forth like an avalanche."

On July 19, the UGT called for a general strike in every place where the fascists had declared a state of war. The national committee of the CNT, for its part, abandoned its traditional stand of "no politics" and called upon all its regional committees to "do their duty".

Thus, the Communist Party's warnings and its unity campaign had opened the way for co-ordinated action of Socialists, Communists and members of the CNT at a time when that unity had become a matter of life and death.

The joint action of Communists and Socialists nullified the element of surprise on which the fascist generals had been banking, and brought the factors of consciousness, organisation and discipline into play in the volcanic eruption of fury and heroism which was the people's response to the fascist military insurrection.

Were the organisers of the rebellion relying on a quick victory over the people?

Their decision to employ colonial troops, their repeated journeyings abroad to seek support, and the secret pacts they concluded with Germany and Italy in order to obtain military equipment from the two fascist states in their war against the Spanish Republic, show that the "African" generals had not ruled out the possibility that the struggle might be fierce and long.

Nonetheless, there is a considerable amount of written evidence to show that none of them had anticipated the furious, unanimous and stubborn resistance they encountered everywhere.

Totally divorced from the people, the "African" generals fell into the same error that Napoleon made in 1808 when he invaded Spain thinking that he was dealing with a people who had neither the spirit nor the will to resist. Such an error, which was perhaps understandable in the great Corsican, seemed inexplicable in Spanish military men. Yet just as there

is a kind of colour-blindness called Daltonism, so there is a class-daltonism among reactionaries that prevents them from seeing the true greatness of the people and the depth of their democratic convictions.

Franco's historians are lying when they declare that on July 18, 1936, "the greater part of Spain" rose up against "the chaos of the People's Front". The historical truth is that, apart from the previously-enrolled handful of fascists in every town and the Carlists in Navarre, no one at the beginning joined the military rebels. Instead the rebels were resisted everywhere by the inflexible hostility of the people.

Attempting to explain the situation in Spain at the beginning of the rebellion, Hitler's Ambassador in Spain wrote on July 23, 1936:

"The close connection between Monarchism and Fascism, coupled with the lack of both a real leader and a social programme appealing to broad circles, has not permitted Fascism to develop into a national movement." (Documents on German Foreign Policy, Series D, Vol. III, page 5).

A Bloodstained Trail

How, then, did the fascists impose their rule?

The towns and villages occupied by the fascist troops became the scene of veritable blood-baths, of mass murders in which the victims were many tens of thousands of Spaniards of the most diverse opinions, democratic or liberal.

In those places where the rebellion succeeded, the reign of terror was monstrous. It is estimated that the number of people murdered in Seville reached 12,000* and in Navarre 14,000**, and the proportion was similar in other towns and regions.

* *Yo he creído en Franco* (I Believed in Franco), Francisco González Ruiz, Barcelona, 1938.

** *En España sale el sol* (The Rises in Spain), Pedro Basaldua, Buenos Aires, 1946.

The call of the fascists to "show no pity" for the Republicans, to "wipe out even their memory", was a continual incitement to crime.

The "columns of Redemption, guided by God" – the expression is that of the Falangist Giménez Caballero – organised a huge massacre of Republicans in the bull-ring at Badajoz, going so far in their sadism as to invite the "élite of the town" to witness this horrifying spectacle. Those columns were under the command of General Franco. Similar crimes were committed in Teruel and other towns.

The shootings were so numerous that in a province like Burgos, where there had been no opposition to the rebellion, the provincial health authorities found it necessary to send out a circular – on August 18, 1937, *more than a year after the uprising* – to the Mayors of villages, giving instructions about the burial of the corpses which had been left lying in the fields and were endangering public health.

Equally eloquent are the descriptions given by the French Catholic author Georges Bernanos in his book *Les grands cimetières sous la lune* (The Great Cemeteries Beneath the Moon). He recounts the scenes he witnessed in Majorca, and describes how for several months groups of murderers, speeding from village to village in lorries requisitioned for the purpose, shot thousands of people in cold blood for everyone to see. Their victims had been judged "suspicious characters" by the fascists although the local Military Tribunal had itself failed to discover any legal pretext which could be used against them.

In Navarre, where there had been no fighting, the fascists used a special method to intensify the reign of terror. When a Requeté (a Carlist soldier) had been killed at the front, his body was taken to his native village for burial, and ghastly reprisals were carried out. In Tafalla, to give one example, the local jail was stormed and 51 Basque peasants who were being held there were taken out and shot. Not one of them had been sentenced to death or even been put on trial.

The American historian Robert Colodny in his book *The*

Struggle for Madrid (New York, 1958) estimates on the basis of reports published in the Portuguese press that more than 200,000 people were executed behind the fascist lines in the first twelve months of the war.

Among the fascist murderers' first victims were men of the highest renown in Spanish art and culture – men such as the poet Federico García Lorca, university professors Leopoldo Alas and Juan Peset, the Catalan Catholic intellectual Carrasco Formiguera, and many others who, even though they had not engaged in any political activity, were put to death by the 20th century Torquemadas who were seeking to exterminate all trace of progressive thought in Spain.

In the zone occupied by the fascists the people were plundered, robbed and ill-treated by the mercenary Moors and Legionaries as well as by the Falangists. The houses, farms and business undertakings of people accused of holding ideas conflicting with those of the rebels were plundered, requisitioned or confiscated. Republicans were subjected to public humiliation – forced to swallow castor oil, daubed with honey, dressed up in mock vestments of paper inscribed with insults and made to walk through the streets shouting Falangist and Requeté slogans. Women's heads were shaved.

The number of crimes committed by the fascists could have been somewhat reduced if the Church had seen fit to condemn them and had used its influence over the rebels to check the reign of terror. But in many cases the Church hierarchy encouraged the repression, cast a veil of silence over the most infamous crimes or even found ways to excuse them, thus sharing in the responsibility borne by the rebel generals and Spanish reaction.

The Collective Letter from the Spanish bishops to the bishops of the whole world, written (as was admitted by Cardinal Gomá on July 7, 1937) at Franco's instigation, presented the unjust war of the rebel generals against the Spanish people, and the German-Italian intervention, as a "holy war", as a "religious crusade" to restore the rights of God.

The bishops' description of the war as a "religious crusade"

did not hinder Franco from shooting, imprisoning or deporting more than 460 Basque priests.

A Divided Army

No less false is that other invention of Franco's propaganda machine – that the rebellion of July 18 was a "unanimous uprising of the whole of the armed forces."

The truth is that only a section of the commanders and officers were involved in the insurrection; and in by no means all the garrisons did the fascists succeed in dragging the troops in their wake. Many commanders and officers remained loyal to the Republic; not a few of them opposed the traitors' plans with arms in their hands.

In a number of Spanish towns the army took no part in the rebellion, as was the case at Santander, Valencia, Murcia, Castellón, Bilbao, Cartagena, Málaga, Ciudad Real, Jaén, Almería, Tarragona, Gerona, Cuenca, Alicante, Huelva, Irún and elsewhere.

At Logroño, Palencia, Valladolid and above all at Cádiz and El Ferrol serious clashes took place between loyal troops and rebels, clashes which were particularly violent in the two last-named towns.

At the air bases of Tetuán, Melilla, Pollensa and León the airmen opposed the insurrection, put up a fierce struggle and sold their lives dearly in defence of the Republic.

In many places the rebellion was put down by joint action of the people and loyal troops.

These facts give the lie to the fable of the "unanimous uprising of the whole of the armed forces."

And it must be added that where the rebels did succeed in getting the rank and file into action on their side, they did so by cunningly concealing their real aims. "Long live the Republic!" was everywhere the slogan with which they came out into the streets, sowing confusion among soldiers, officers and NCO's who were unwilling to rise against the constitutional government.

The rebels distrusted the soldiers to such an extent that wherever they could they introduced local fascists into the barracks before the rising, gave them arms and then distributed them throughout the ranks. In Ovideo, for example, Colonel Aranda brought in 960 civilians and mixed them with the troops in this way. At the No. 4 Army Depot in Barcelona, 1,800 fascists were armed and put into uniform. The same thing happened in Madrid, Gijón and other towns.

The insurgents betrayed not only the regime to which they had sworn loyalty but the army as well and their own comrades-in-arms. Where the fascists were successful, those honourable officers who refused to betray their oath of loyalty to the regime were shamefully murdered. Death came in this manner to Generals Villabril, Pita Caridad, Salcedo, Batet, Gómez Morato, Romerales, Núñez del Prado and Molero, and to Admiral Arazola and hundreds of officers and other ranks.

Favourable Balance

By the beginning of August 1936 the overall picture of the struggle was favourable to the Republic.

The areas where the fascists had gained control were mainly agricultural regions of big feudal estates or impoverished small farms, without any important working-class centres. Spain's most populous cities – Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia and Bilbao – were in Republican hands together with the whole of Catalonia. Asturias, Santander and all save one (Alava) of the Basque provinces remained Republican, as did the rich provinces of Levante. New Castille and Extremadura formed a broad Republican wedge thrusting out to the Portuguese frontier and cutting the rebel-occupied territory in two. In Andalusia, the towns of Málaga, Jaén and Almería were in loyal hands, together with the mining region of Huelva, headed by Río Tinto, which was defended by the local miners.

The Republic controlled the main commercial ports of the

Mediterranean and the Cantabrian coasts, the main industrial and mining centres and the most prosperous agricultural areas.

In the first fortnight after the uprising the rebel generals failed to capture a single other important town; indeed they were beginning to be thrown out of some of the places they had occupied at the very beginning. On July 24 the Republicans took Tolosa and Villanueva de Córdoba. Huesca and Granada were almost encircled and fighting was raging at the gates of Saragossa and Córdoba. The pressure of the people's militia was increasing and the situation of the insurgents was becoming daily more critical. Qucipo de Llano was bogged down in Seville; Aranda was on the defensive in Oviedo, and Franco – ever cautious – was still lurking in Africa, not daring to cross the Straits of Gibraltar. At Mola's headquarters they were already beginning to think of "a Numantian way out."*

It looked as though the insurrection was on its last legs, as far as the Peninsula was concerned.

The Spanish people had saved the Republic. In that great clash it had again become apparent that the forces of Spanish democracy were stronger than the forces of reaction, even when the latter carried struggle to the extreme limits of physical violence.

And then there was committed the great crime, kept in reserve by the forces of Spanish reaction: the open and shameless intervention of Hitler and Mussolini, backed up by the "Non-Intervention" policy of the so-called democratic powers.

* Numantia, an ancient town of Spain, was besieged by the Romans in 134 B. C. Its defenders set fire to the town, threw their wives and children into the flames and then marched out to their death rather than surrender.

3

Foreign intervention

The intervention of the foreign fascist powers brought about a radical change in the character of the Spanish War. It was no longer simply a struggle between Spanish reaction and democracy. Spain's internal system was no longer the only matter at issue. Now it had become a war in defence of national independence and sovereignty, a national-revolutionary war whose aim was to safeguard Spain's independence and the democratic, anti-fascist gains of her people.

In a statement issued exactly one month after the outbreak of war, on August 18, 1936, the Spanish Communist Party declared:

"The war, which began as a struggle between the military and reactionary forces of our country on the one hand, and those who want a democratic, progressive Spain on the other, has quickly burst these bounds and has been transformed into a war of independence. The whole people must rise up to prevent our country from being trampled under the bloodstained jackboots of rapacious foreigners..."

German and Italian Aggression

Now that the contents of a large part of the secret files of the Wilhelmstrasse, discovered after Hitler's defeat and

published in various countries, have become known, the official German documents themselves provide irrefutable proof that Franco could not have won the war and could not have seized power without the intervention of Hitler and Mussolini.

Foreign bayonets – that is what the “legality” of Franco’s state is founded on.

“Without the military aid of Germany and Italy, Franco would not exist today.” That is what Hitler himself declared on September 28, 1940, in a conversation with Ciano, who recorded it in his *Diary*.

One of the first things Franco did when he reached Tetuán from the Canary Isles was to contact two German secret agents – Bernhardt and Langenheim – then living in Morocco, and send them by air to Berlin with a personal letter to Hitler.

Six days later the first German planes began to arrive in Spanish Morocco. Italian aircraft arrived there at the same time.

It was thanks to these planes, which formed an “air bridge” across the Straits of Gibraltar and bombed the warships loyal to the Republic in this zone, that Franco was able to transport forces of the Foreign Legion and Moroccan troops by sea and air to the peninsula.

The intervention of Germany and Italy, which was decisive in the first stage of the war, continued to increase in scope and volume.

“Franco had stated”, wrote Ciano in 1940, “that if he received twelve transport and bomber planes he would win the war in a few days. Those twelve aircraft became 1,000 planes, 6,000 dead and thousands of millions of lire...”

When the defenders of Madrid smashed Franco’s crack troops in November 1936, German and Italian military intervention was stepped up.

“You should be aware, as I am”, said Mr. William Bullitt, the United States Ambassador in Paris, to the French minister Yvon Delbos, towards the end of November 1936, “that Franco is so short of men that if he does not receive immediate and large-scale assistance from Italy and Germany his

movement may be overwhelmed...” (*The Foreign Relations of the United States, States Department Papers*, Washington, Vol. II.)

Mussolini, alarmed at the prospect that Franco’s adventure might fail, sent several divisions of the Italian army to Spain, with their staffs, services, arms, equipment and so forth. The majority of the officers had already fought in the Abyssinian campaign. In all, the number of Italian troops who took part in the Spanish war amounted to 150,000.

The Italian air forces assigned to Spain carried out 86,420 flights (during the Abyssinian war they had made 3,979) and 5,318 bombing raids, in the course of which 11,585 tons of explosive were dropped on the Spanish population.

A big proportion of the Italian navy also took part in one way or another – particularly its submarines, which sank dozens of ships in the Mediterranean, and not only Spanish ships but Soviet, British and Norwegian ones and vessels of other nationalities.

In October 1936 Germany organised for the war against the Spanish Republic a special air unit under the command of General Sperrle – and later under Generals Richthofen and Volkmann. This was the Condor Legion. It started with 5,000 men but was later considerably enlarged.

Germany also sent units of tanks, artillery, signals etc., as well as thousands of officers to train and organise Franco’s army.

The fact that 26,113 German military personnel received decorations from Hitler for “meritorious conduct” in the Spanish War gives some idea of the extent of the Wehrmacht’s intervention on Franco’s behalf.

The number of German officers and specialists who took part in the war against the Spanish Republic is reported to have totalled over 50,000.

Germany and Franco

Scarcely had the military-fascist rebellion begun when it found itself without a leader. On July 20, 1936, General Sanjurjo, when he was preparing to go to Spain to take charge of the uprising, was killed when the small plane in which he was travelling crashed in mysterious circumstances near Lisbon.

Now that the rebellion had been deprived of its leader, Mola, Sanjurjo's second-in-command, with Generals Cabanellas, Saliquet and Dávila and Staff Colonels Montaner and Moreno Calderón, thereupon formed the so-called Burgos Junta on July 24. Mola played the decisive role in this body since he had supreme command of all the rebel units in the north of Spain and also of the Requeté forces, which the Carlists had placed under his orders.

With these mercenary troops, and with German help, Franco advanced at top speed in the direction of Talavera and Toledo in order to steal a march on General Mola and put himself at the head of the rebel movement.

Then began a struggle for the leadership of the rebellion between the generals aspiring to the position of *Caudillo* (Chief) and the various factions backing them. This struggle – sometimes open and sometimes concealed – was settled in Franco's favour by the fiat of Hitler Germany. The head of Germany's espionage system, Admiral Canaris, had been in contact with Franco from the time of the First World War, when Canaris had headed the German secret service in Morocco.

To ensure that Franco came out on top, the Hitler government, under Goering's control, sent its aircraft, arms and military personnel to that part of rebel territory which was directly under Franco's orders. Meanwhile Mola complained bitterly to the Germans that he was not receiving much-needed supplies.

German aid enabled the Moorish and Foreign Legion units under Franco's command not merely to occupy Talavera, but to advance on Toledo, which they seized on September 27. Within the fascist camp the victorious advance of these troops tipped the scales decisively in Franco's favour.

Meanwhile Admiral Canaris had arrived at Franco's H. Q. in Cáceres. He had been joined on his way through Rome by the Italian intelligence chief, General Roatta. Hitler had compelled Mussolini to accept Franco as Spain's future fascist dictator.

A few days later, towards the end of September 1936, the rebel Generals Cabanellas, Quiapo de Llano, Orgaz, Gil Yuste, Franco, Mola, Saliquet, Dávila and Kindelán, and Colonels Montaner and Moreno Calderón, met at San Fernando aerodrome, near Salamanca, to appoint the leader of the rebel movement. After stormy arguments, and against the opposition of Cabanellas and Mola, the choice fell on General Franco, Hitler Germany's candidate.

In accordance with this agreement, a decree was published in the "Official Bulletin" of the Burgos Junta on September 30, naming Franco as "head of the government of the Spanish State" and of the "nationalist" armies. On the following day, October 1, Franco carried out a veritable *coup d'état*. After dissolving the Burgos Junta and forming what he called a "State Technical Council" to administer the rebel areas, he proclaimed himself "Head of the Spanish State". Thus blatantly, in violation of the agreement reached at the meeting of the rebel generals, Franco turned himself overnight into the "Leader [Caudillo] of Spain by the Grace of God", concentrating in his own hands the control of the state, the government and the army.

The final episode in Franco's rise to absolute power was the death of General Mola in suspicious circumstances in an air accident on June 1, 1937. And although it is not easy to discover the identity of the "instruments of providence" in this case, many witnesses have testified that Franco received the news of Mola's death with satisfaction.

Other Assistance for Franco

A further important aspect of foreign intervention in Spain was the incorporation of tens of thousands of Moors in Fran-

co's army. This was carried out despite the protest of the Sultan of Morocco – expressed in a letter to the French High Commissioner – and not merely in the Spanish Protectorate but also in the French zone and in Algeria, with the approval of the French colonial authorities, or at least with passive acceptance on their part.

The most advanced sections of the Moroccan people protested in various ways against the recruitment of Moors for Franco's army, and there were even a number of risings against the French authorities.

Outstanding nationalist leaders of Morocco approached Léon Blum, the French Prime Minister, with the proposal that a big rising against Franco should be organised in the Riff. Blum rejected this proposal for fear that there might be disagreeable consequences for French colonial domination in Morocco.

Blum is reported to have said, in a conversation with his British biographer Geoffrey Fraser after 1940, that he regarded it as "the biggest mistake of his political career" to have turned down the proposal of the Moroccan nationalists in 1936.

In all, the North African mercenaries who took part in the so-called Christian Crusade against the Spanish Republic numbered over 100,000; and no small part of these were recruited outside the Spanish Protectorate.

Salazar's dictatorship provided great assistance to the fascist uprising. A big proportion of the shipments of German arms reached the rebels through Portugal. Portuguese territory, aerodromes, telecommunications and radio, and even the army and police, were put directly at Franco's disposal by Salazar. Franco's troops moved freely through Portuguese territory; German planes flew from Portuguese aerodromes to bomb Badajóz and other Spanish towns. Spanish Republicans seeking refuge in Portugal were seized and handed back to the Franco authorities, especially in the regions of Estremadura, and summarily shot. A Portuguese contingent of about 15,000 men fought in Franco's army.

From the foregoing it can be seen that over 300,000 foreign officers and men – Italian, German, Moorish and Portuguese – intervened in the Spanish War on the side of the fascists.

The United States on Franco's Side

Decisive as the intervention of Italy and Germany was, with its aeroplanes, tanks, artillery, submarines and troops, there was another factor which is absolutely indispensable in modern warfare and without which neither the aeroplanes, nor the tanks, nor the armies could have moved. And that was something neither Germany nor Italy was in a position to supply to Franco – petrol.

And throughout the war Franco was able to draw on practically unlimited supplies of petrol, because it was provided for him by the big United States monopolies, particularly Standard Oil, with the backing of the United States government.

"The German aeroplanes that bombed Guernica, the Italian planes that bombed the masses of refugees along the roads... were powered by United States petrol," wrote the U. S. journalist Charles Folz.

"Without American petrol, American trucks and American credits, we could never have won the war," the same journalist was told in 1945 by Franco's then Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs, José María Doussinague.

Officially the United States proclaimed its "neutrality" in relation to the Spanish war, and imposed an "embargo" on the sending of arms to either of the contending sides. This attitude, which constituted a breach of international law and did great harm to the Republic, was translated, in actual fact, into large-scale and many-sided assistance to the fascist rebels.

When the rebellion broke out, Texaco (the Texas Oil Company), a subsidiary of Standard Oil, had five tankers on the high seas bound for Spain. Captain T. Rieber, head of the company, ordered them to change their route and make for one of the ports occupied by the rebels. The supply of U. S.

petrol, including aviation fuel, to Franco, was stepped up as his needs increased with the arrival of further German and Italian aircraft and tanks.

According to Mr. H. Feis, economic adviser to the U. S. Embassy in Madrid during the Second World War, Franco received from Texaco the following shipments of petrol:

Year	Metric tons
1936	344,000
1937	420,000
1938	478,000
1939	624,000

All these deliveries were made on credit, which meant that Franco's rebellion was financed with a loan of many million dollars.

As for the shipment of arms, the American "embargo" was similarly a cover for aid to Franco.

The United States government resolutely opposed the efforts of Mexico to obtain military supplies in the United States for re-shipment to the Spanish Republic. But the rebels were enabled to receive arms and ammunition made in the United States through Germany and Italy, and Roosevelt was personally obliged to admit this. At a press conference which he held on April 21, 1938, when Barcelona and other towns in Republican territory had been terribly bombed, Roosevelt stated: "We have heard that bombs of American make have been dropped on Barcelona by Franco planes. It may be so. They may have been sold to the German government or a German company and then re-exported."

Deliveries of United States trucks also had a tremendous importance for the rebels, from the military point of view. In the course of the war Franco's army received the following supplies of trucks:

1,200	from Germany
1,800	from Italy
12,800	from the United States
(Ford, Studebaker and General Motors)	

When the Spanish War was over and they began to see clearly that Hitler was directing his aggression against the west and threatening the imperialist interests of the United States, some of those who had backed the "embargo" policy saw the error of their ways.

The U. S. Assistant Secretary of State, Sumner Welles, described it as "the cardinal error of American foreign policy in the Roosevelt period". With a different policy, he wrote, the United States could have changed the attitude of France and Britain, avoided the defeat of the Spanish Republic and thus restrained the aggressive course of German and Italian policy.

The democratic countries, wrote the American historian F. J. Taylor, referring to the United States, France and Britain, were "collaborators with the Axis" in its war to destroy the Spanish people's democracy and in this way they committed "one of the blackest crimes against freedom in modern times". (*The United States and the Spanish Civil War*, New York, 1956.)

Intervention Styled "Non-Intervention"

When the fascist rebellion broke out in Spain it was the strict obligation of all foreign governments, according to the terms of international law, to continue to authorise the free sale of every class of goods, including arms, to the legal government of Spain. To alter this universally-recognised rule was to punish the Spanish government because a group of perjured generals had rebelled against it. It meant, in fact, interference in the internal affairs of Spain on behalf of the generals who had taken up arms against the lawful regime.

The Spanish government had the financial resources to pay for the arms it needed. Had international law been observed, the Republic would have been able to put down the fascist rebellion in a very short time, in spite of the aid the rebels were receiving from Italy and Germany.

Neither the German-Italian military aid, nor the supplies

of petrol, lorries and bombs from the United States, were sufficient to compensate the rebels for the considerable superiority enjoyed by the Republic by virtue of the support it was receiving from the vast mass of the heroic people, ready to fight to the death. No, in addition to that aid and those supplies, it was necessary to strangle the Republic, to prevent the Republican fighters from receiving the arms they so desperately needed.

That aspect of foreign intervention in the Spanish war, which consisted in helping Franco to win by strangling the Republic, was paradoxically called "Non-Intervention". Its main architects were Britain and France, with the compliance and assent of the Second International.

As for relations between France and the Spanish Republic, apart from the general terms of international law, there was also a clause in the Trade Treaty signed between the two governments in December 1935 which made it obligatory for Spain to buy arms from France. Contracts were also about to be put into operation for the manufacture and supply of French arms for Spain. And above all there was the basic political fact that both in France and Spain the People's Front had won electoral victories and in both countries governments supported by the People's Front were in power. It was logical, therefore, that the Spanish Republican Government should approach France first of all in order to obtain the planes, guns and other arms which were so urgently needed.

In London the Conservatives, the direct representatives of the big capitalist monopolies, were in power. Several ministers had interests in Spanish mines. Over and above a general hatred for anything that might contribute to Spain's freedom and greatness, there was the determination of the exploiters of Río Tinto to destroy the People's Front, whose policy of social progress was viewed by them as a threat to their enormous profits. It was this that determined British policy.

To prevent the Republic from obtaining arms, Britain devised the so-called Non-Intervention policy.

The purpose of British policy was to contribute to the

destruction of the People's Front in Spain. This destruction, London calculated, could be brought about in one of two ways: either both sides would exhaust themselves, in which case Britain could step in as the "mediator" and increase her hold on the Iberian Peninsula; or Franco might be victorious, in which case, they concluded, he would have to obtain loans from the City and Wall Street. This would enable Britain to maintain her traditional positions and influence in Spain even if they might have to be shared to some extent with Germany, Italy and the United States.

Both before and during the war, the big British monopolies provided Franco with tremendous financial assistance. The City backed Franco to the limit. Very shortly after the northern part of Spain had fallen into Franco's hands, the British government established official relations with him, sent a representative to Burgos and increased its financial and commercial dealings with the fascist rebels.

Among the imperialist powers, all enemies of the Republic, there was in fact a kind of division of labour: Germany and Italy helped Franco; Britain, with France trailing in her wake, took on the task of strangling the Republic. The United States did both.

The Role of Léon Blum

Had it been publicly launched by its real authors, the British Tories, the "Non-Intervention" policy would have had only a limited effect. All friends of the Spanish Republic would have risen up against it; Communists, Socialists, democrats of all kinds would have formed a common front to oppose it. It would have been swept away by popular indignation.

London sought more devious ways of getting what it wanted. On July 23, 1936, Blum and his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yvon Delbos, journeyed to the British capital. There the Tory government put strong pressure on them to refuse to supply arms to the Spanish Republic and to undertake the

shameful task of proposing the "Non-Intervention" policy to the world in the name of the French Popular Front.

France's big bourgeoisie, vitally interested in the destruction of the People's Front in Spain – which would, they hoped, create a split in the Popular Front in their own country – mobilised all their forces to make the Blum government refuse to send any arms to Spain.

Franco, through his agents in London and Paris, also played an active part in this massive political drive to influence the Blum government. In a conversation with the German Consul in Tetuán on July 24, 1936, referring to news that was circulating about deliveries of French arms to the Spanish Republic, Franco actually said: "Negotiations are going on to prevent those deliveries."

The Blum government capitulated in the most shameful way. On July 25, it refused the requests for arms presented to it by the Giral government. On August 1, it approached the principal European countries with the proposal that they should collectively apply a policy of "Non-Intervention" in relation to the war in Spain. On August 8, it went a step further: it declared that the French government, without waiting for the other European powers to give a similar undertaking, would *unilaterally* prohibit all sales of arms to Spain.

This unilateral approach was the essence of the whole policy of "Non-Intervention", the effect of which was to prevent the supplying of the Republic with arms and to cover up the massive supply of arms, planes, troops etc. to the rebels by Germany and Italy.

Sponsored as it was by Léon Blum, one of the top leaders of the Second International, the "Non-Intervention" policy served to split the ranks of those who were in sympathy with the Spanish Republic.

In spite of the deep fellow-feeling of the socialist workers for the struggle of the Spanish people, the socialist parties and the Second International contributed to the strangling of the Spanish Republic either by supporting "Non-Intervention" or by refusing to wage a consistent struggle against it.

From the very first days of the war, the struggle to rescind the policy of "Non-Intervention" became a question of life and death for the cause of Spanish democracy. It was a struggle against strangulation, a struggle to provide the fighters of the Spanish Republic with arms and ammunition. The crucial battleground in this struggle was Paris.

The Republican government sent a parliamentary delegation – which included Dolores Ibárruri – to the French capital to tell the democratic people of France about the situation in Spain and the kind of struggle that was being waged on the other side of the Pyrenees.

At an important meeting held in the Vélodrome d'Hiver on September 3, 1936, Dolores Ibárruri stirred the hearts of an audience of 40,000, making them realise that the cause of Spain was the cause of France.

She warned the people of France, from hard and bitter experience of the nature of fascism, that if the crime being committed against the Spanish people were allowed to be perpetrated, war would descend on France.

"As for heroism, our people have enough and to spare", she told them. "But heroism is not enough. In order to oppose the fascist arms we must have rifles, aeroplanes, artillery. We are defending the cause of liberty and peace. We must have planes and guns for our struggle."

"*Planes, guns, arms for Spain!*" That cry resounded to the mighty roof of the Vélodrome d'Hiver, and quickly spread to the factories and streets of Paris.

The following day a huge demonstration marched through the centre of the French capital, filling the Place de la République for several hours, to the cry of "*Guns and planes for Spain!*"

The engineering workers, the vanguard of the Parisian working class, went on strike demanding the lifting of the blockade of the Spanish Republic. This demand was presented personally to Léon Blum by Jean-Pierre Timbault, who was later to become one of the heroes and martyrs of the French resistance.

The speeches and statements of Dolores Ibárruri led to

profound repercussions inside the French Socialist Party itself. Léon Blum, the Prime Minister, felt obliged to appear before his fellow-members at a meeting in Luna Park on September 6, in order to attempt to answer what she had said. He was greeted with shouts of "Guns and planes for Spain!" To defend his policy in front of the socialist workers he resorted to the argument – false from every point of view – that "Non-Intervention" was the only way to safeguard peace.

To pose "Non-Intervention" as the alternative to war, as Blum did, was utterly wrong. As the Communists declared from the beginning (and as history conclusively proved) the Nazis were able to intervene in Spain, develop their aggression in Central Europe and then go on to launch a world war precisely *because* of the capitulation of the western powers and the social-democratic leaders.

"Non-Intervention" and the French People.

If the Blum government had taken a firm stand in 1936, Hitler would have had to withdraw from Spain. His own military leaders were demanding this. The Spanish Republic would have been saved.

The policy which directly facilitated the execution of Hitler's aggressive plans and the unleashing of the Second World War was the policy of "Non-Intervention". And though its first and main victim was the Spanish people, the French people, too, paid the price for it later – and paid for its consequences with the blood of their best sons during the dark night of the Nazi occupation.

One of its first results for France was to shatter the entire system of alliances on which French policy had been based since the First World War.

It is not difficult to see why. For how much confidence could the countries of Eastern and Central Europe – hundreds of miles from France – have in the word of the French government when they saw how it allowed the Germans to deploy their troops right on the very borders of France with the

purpose of establishing in Madrid a government that would be France's enemy and Hitler's servant? – And when they saw, furthermore, that the French government was not only allowing this to happen but was actively contributing to the success of the Germans and their fascist protégés in Spain by treacherously throttling the Spanish Republic?

When the French government applied the "Non-intervention" policy, France's prestige crumbled to dust and her former allies started to turn away from her. On August 30, 1936, a "palace revolution" took place in Rumania; Titulesco, an old friend of France and a supporter of collective security, was dismissed from the government and replaced by Antonescu, who stood for closer relations with Berlin. The savage dictatorship of Metaxas was imposed in Greece. In October, the King of the Belgians, with the support of the socialist minister Spaak, announced that Belgium was rescinding her former political and military agreements with France. In March 1937, Yugoslavia – breaking her traditional ties with France – signed a treaty of friendship with Italy. The Polish government began to move in the direction of an understanding with Hitler.

As it weakened France, so the "Non-Intervention" policy encouraged the fascist states' aggressive tendencies and consolidated their unity. On August 24, 1936, Hitler, once again violating the Versailles Treaty, introduced two-year conscription in Germany. October 1936 saw the official formation of the "Rome-Berlin Axis", one of its guiding principles being joint military intervention against the Spanish Republic. In November 1936, the so-called Anti-Comintern Pact was signed between Germany and Japan; Italy joined it a year later and the triple alliance of the aggressor states became complete.

In a speech delivered on October 11, 1936, calling on the French people to oppose the policy of "Non-Intervention", Maurice Thorez declared: "We are motivated not only by sentiments, which after all are quite legitimate, of proletarian solidarity towards the Spanish workers, and not only by our support for the common cause of democracy which the Spanish Republicans are defending. We are acting as French-

men who do not want to see the integrity and security of our country jeopardised... The civil war in Spain is a military operation against France, an attempt by Hitler to isolate France."

A further result of the "Non-Intervention" policy was the weakening and breaking of the French Popular Front. A policy of effective solidarity with the Spanish Republic could have greatly heightened the prestige of the Blum government. Unity between the French socialists and communists would have been strengthened. The French working class would have carried greater weight in the life of the country. France, with a powerful Popular Front movement, together with the neighbouring Spanish Republic victorious over fascism, could have formed a mighty bastion of peace, democracy and social progress in Western Europe.

But rather than open the way to that prospect, the leaders of the Second International, beginning with Blum, chose to facilitate the victory of fascism and submitted blindly to the dictates of British reaction. "Non-Intervention" meant that the independence of French foreign policy completely disappeared. The Quai d'Orsay became a mere appendage of Downing Street.

Such a state of affairs could not be accepted by the more advanced among the French workers and democrats. These, headed by the Communist Party, waged a fierce and determined struggle against the blockade of the Spanish Republic.

"Non-Intervention", declared Maurice Thorez in the French Parliament, "means intervention against the Spanish Republic. To refuse arms to a legal government is to apply sanctions against it."

The French Communists fought hard and consistently for the re-establishment of the role of international law and the restoration of the right of the Spanish Republic to receive arms and aircraft.

When Blum decided to blockade the Spanish Republic against the wishes of his own people (including the workers in his own Socialist Party) he undermined the unity of the French Popular Front and provoked its disruption. Reaction

profited from this, to the direct disadvantage of the Socialist Party. Ten months after he had introduced the "Non-Intervention" policy, Blum was obliged to hand in his resignation. The reins of power passed into the hands of bourgeois politicians like Georges Bonnet and others, who were open advocates of collaboration with Hitler.

The London Committee

From the purely formal point of view, the "Non-Intervention" Agreement consisted of identical declarations by twenty-seven European states that they would not send arms, either directly or indirectly, to Spain. With the aim of keeping one another informed and consulting together on the fulfilment of this agreement a so-called "Non-Intervention" Committee was set up with its headquarters in London.

The whole system of "Non-Intervention" was based on the following premises:

First, the fascist dictators were resolved from the very outset to pay lip-service to it but not to carry out their word in the slightest degree. "Italy has not the least intention in any event of respecting the declaration," the German Chargé d'Affaires in Rome cabled to his government on August 28, 1936.

Secondly, the British and French leaders were determined to do nothing to make Germany and Italy carry out the agreement, but were, on the other hand, determined strictly to apply the ban on the sale of arms to the Spanish Republic.

It was a case of bare-faced hypocrisy.

The real essence of London's policy, which had constant support from Paris, was revealed clearly by the conclusion of a "gentlemen's agreement" between Britain and Italy on July 2, 1937.

This was signed at the very time when Italy was sending massive shipments of troops and arms to Spain in preparation for the battles of Málaga and Guadalajara. Britain regarded these shipments with approval, insofar as they were helping to destroy the Republic. But at the same time she was anxious

lest Italy should obtain permanent bases in the Balearic Islands or in other parts of the Mediterranean. Under this agreement, Britain gave Italy *carte blanche* to conduct military intervention with her troops in support of Franco, while Italy undertook not to change the *status quo* in the Mediterranean nor *permanently* to establish a military occupation of any part of Spanish territory.

The London Committee's system of control gave the fascist powers enormous advantages. It provided a justification for the German and Italian fleets (both of which were operating as belligerents against the Republic) to establish a constant patrol of the Republic's coastline and carry out savage acts of aggression; in May 1937, for example, the German navy made use of a clumsy pretext to bombard the open town of Almería in a most brutal way, causing many deaths among the population.

A further advantage of the "Non-Intervention" system for the Italian and German aggressors was that it removed the Spanish problem from the councils of the League of Nations. If the Non-Intervention Committee had not existed, the international aspects of the Spanish War would have been debated and settled on the basis of the League of Nations Covenant. This would have made it much easier to condemn the aggressors or at least to unmask those who were covering up aggression.

But each time the Spanish Republican government had recourse to the League in order to denounce the German and Italian aggression against Spain, British and French pressure induced the League to decline to pronounce judgment, on the pretext that this was a matter for the London Committee, or else to restrict itself to encouraging the London Committee's activities.

The policy of France and Britain on the Spanish question was not only iniquitous. It was also blind and stupid. Britain thought that by making concessions to Mussolini's arrogant bluff she would be able to drive a wedge between Italy and Germany. The effect was the opposite. Italy simply tied herself more closely to the Hitler policy of bellicose adventurism.

The United States, British and French imperialists assumed that if they helped fascism to destroy the People's Front in France and Spain, it would be easy to direct its next attack against the Soviet Union.

They miscalculated in the most absurd fashion. The weakening of the anti-fascist forces in the countries of Western Europe and the defeatist attitude adopted by their ruling circles encouraged Hitler to strike first where he thought he would encounter least resistance.

With "Non-Intervention" the governments in Paris and London paved the way to the downfall of France and the shameful capitulation of Petain in 1940, to the catastrophe of Dunkirk and to the bombing of London and Coventry...

The only country in the world which, in defence of the Spanish people, consistently fought against German and Italian intervention and the farce of imperialist "Non-Intervention", was the Soviet Union.

Despite the fact that even after the triumph of the People's Front the governing circles of the Spanish Republic, ridiculously anti-Soviet, had not established normal diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, that country demonstrated its complete political and moral solidarity with the Spanish Republic from the outbreak of the fascist rebellion.

When the French government made its "Non-Intervention" proposal to the other European powers, the Soviet Union agreed in principle to this, although it denied that a group of rebel generals could be considered in the same category as the legal government of Spain. A Soviet refusal at this stage would simply have given the fascist powers a pretext to increase their intervention.

The Soviet Union, upholding the principle of respect for the independence and sovereignty of all countries, had no interest in intervening in Spain, and no desire to do so. It considered that it was the concern of the Spanish people to solve their own problems. And if the "Non-Intervention" policy had been applied in a genuine and effective way by all the countries concerned, the Spanish Republic would hardly have succeeded in putting down the rebellion - which

was only able to continue, as we have already seen, thanks to the intervention of Italy and Germany.

For this reason the Soviet Union, when replying on August 6, 1936, to the French "Non-Intervention" proposal, laid down the following indispensable condition: "That the help which certain countries are giving to those who have rebelled against the legal Spanish government *must cease forthwith*."

It very soon became apparent, however, that this help, far from ceasing, was being stepped up.

The Soviet Union tried extremely hard to get Britain, France and other states, jointly with itself, to declare that in view of the breaches by Germany and Italy of the "Non-Intervention" agreements, these should be rescinded and the right of the Spanish Republic to buy arms from other countries should be restored.

But these proposals met with refusal. The Soviet Union decided to act alone in defence of the Spanish people.

On October 7 she sent an official communication to the London Committee, which stated:

"The Soviet government cannot, in any event, consent to the Non-Intervention agreement being transformed by certain of the parties" into a screen intended to conceal the military aid being given to the rebels against the legal Spanish government.

"Consequently, the Soviet government finds itself obliged to state that if these violations do not cease immediately, the U. S. S. R. will consider itself freed from any obligations ensuing from the 'Non-Intervention' Agreement."

On October 23, 1936, in a further letter to the London Committee, the Soviet Union declared that the only solution was to restore to the Spanish government all facilities for acquiring arms abroad. "The Soviet government", stated the note, "cannot feel itself bound by the Non-Intervention agreement to any greater degree than any of the other parties to that agreement".

This decision did not remain a purely verbal one. It found expression in the arrival in the hands of the Republican fighters of the arms they needed to resist fascist aggression.

Throughout the entire war the Soviet government continued to wage an incessant diplomatic and political battle against the farce of "Non-Intervention".

Inside the London Committee, of which the Soviet Union remained a member so as to expose the crimes of the fascist aggressors and the hypocrisy of the imperialist powers (just as it did in the League of Nations), the Soviet delegates were the firm and constant defenders of the Spanish Republic.

The experience of the war in Spain made it abundantly clear that the existence of the Soviet Union had introduced a totally new element into world diplomacy. It was not by chance that the Soviet Union was the only state in the world to help the Spanish Republic; it was a direct consequence of the fact that it was a socialist state.

The battle of Madrid

The fascists were in a great hurry to gain control of Madrid, the Spanish capital, because of its geographical position, its political influence and its significance abroad.

All in all, the Battle of Madrid lasted from July 1936 to the defeat of the fascists at Guadalajara in March 1937.

Four great offensives were launched against the Republican capital by the fascist forces, with the participation of Moorish troops, Foreign Legionaries, Italians and Germans.

The most important of these took place in November 1936. The second – the fascist attempt to penetrate from the north-west through Majadahonda, was in January 1937. With their third attack, at Jarama, the rebels tried to open a way to the heroic city from the south-west. In March came the fourth and last offensive against Madrid, the great Battle of Guadalajara, in which the People's Army dealt a very heavy blow to Mussolini's fascist legions.

The fascists failed to take Madrid. They were unable to subdue a people who, in the words of Dolores Ibárruri, preferred "to die on their feet rather than live on their knees".

Fighting to defend their own freedom and independence and to prevent the onward march of fascism in Europe, the Spanish people astonished the entire world.

The prognostications of the military experts and the specialists in international politics were shattered by defenders of the Republic, who were themselves neither generals nor statesmen.

They were the people, the heroic people of Spain, her workers, peasants, young lads and girls, progressive intellectuals, democratic citizens. And when the common people enter the lists, fired with the conviction that it is time to take into their own hands the defence of their country and everything that is dearest to them, all the so-called classical and "universal" military laws cease to apply.

In the first days of November 1936, the eyes of the whole world were turned towards the capital of the Spanish Republic. All the big European newspapers were talking about Madrid's "last hours".

On the afternoon of November 4, General Varela told a group of foreign correspondents at his headquarters in Getafe: "You may inform the world that Madrid will be captured this week".

When Henry Buckley, *Daily Telegraph* correspondent, telephoned his paper on the night of November 7 and described the calm prevailing among the population of Madrid, his editor interrupted him to ask where he was speaking from – reports had already reached London that Franco was fighting in the centre of the city.

Taking the fall of Madrid for granted, the Italian and German Foreign Ministers, Ciano and von Neurath, had agreed on October 21 to recognise Franco directly the capital was in his hands.

The London *Times* expressed the hope that Britain would show less hesitation about the possibility of recognising Franco's government. The *New Statesman* declared that unless a miracle happened the fascists would take Madrid.

The miracle did happen. It was the heroic achievement of a people firmly and capably led by the Communist Party.

The slogan "*No pasarán!*" (They shall not pass!) raised by the Communists on the first day of the fascist uprising, had become by November the battle-cry of all Spanish anti-fascists.

"Anyone who has not witnessed the stages of the resistance in Madrid", wrote the Italian Socialist leader Pietro Nenni in his book *Spagna*, "cannot appreciate what a people is capable of when it is inspired by a great ideal".

Change of Government

Madrid's resistance was the fruit of constant and tenacious work by the organisations of the People's Front. It was due to the preparation and organisational work of the Communists, who gave the common people faith in their own strength and their ability to save the Republic.

At the beginning of September, after Giral had resigned, a new government was formed under the Socialist leader Largo Caballero, who became Minister of War as well as Premier.

His cabinet consisted of five other Socialist Ministers, three Republicans, one Catalan Nationalist, one Basque Nationalist, and two Communists.

This was the first time that the Communist Party took part in the government of the Republic. On accepting Caballero's invitation, the Communists stated that they were entering the government to contribute "to the winning of the war, the solution of the problems of the democratic revolution and the strengthening of the unity of all the people's forces".

At the same time they put forward the programme for which they intended to strive within the government. Its main points were: unification of all the militia of the various parties and organisations and the formation of a People's Army; genuine agrarian reform; the raising of the living standards of the working people; respect for freedom of worship; national autonomy to be granted to the Basque Country and Galicia (Catalonia had already received its Statute).

This programme was fully in keeping with the democratic and popular character of the Republic and with the needs of the war.

Incredible though it may seem, one of the most difficult questions to solve in the government was that of organising the Army, which, because of the rebellion, had disintegrated.

This vital matter was complicated by the political and military ideas of the Premier and War Minister, the Socialist Largo Caballero. He maintained, in the face of all logic, that the Republic did not need a regular army, that its defence could be left to the militia, operating a guerrilla-type resistance

struggle such as existed in the national war against Napoleon, with no Supreme Command, no headquarters staffs, no discipline and no organisation – and all this when the Republic had to face a modern, disciplined army equipped by the fascist powers!

The Anarchists supported the stand of the War Minister. They stubbornly opposed any effort to organise and centralise military operations.

After the fall of Talavera, early in September, the Communist Party strove to convince the War Minister of the urgent need to dig trenches and to surround Madrid with a series of fortifications which would protect the approaches to the capital. The War Minister, on the contrary, considered that trenches were unnecessary and that panic would be caused if the people were called on to build fortifications. He declared that Spaniards "prefer to fight in the open and not to demean themselves by cowering in trenches".

The Communists exposed the stupidity of this argument by pointing to what was actually happening and they mobilised the people to build fortifications. Tens of thousands of men, women and even children, armed with picks and shovels, responded to the Party's call, and, against the wishes of the War Minister, three lines of defence were built to protect the capital.

One of the great merits of the Communist Party was the tireless work it carried on throughout the thirty-two months of the war to maintain the unity of the People's Front.

Thanks to its patient efforts and the people's firm desire for unity, the other political forces eventually – though too slowly – came to accept many of the Communist proposals for the successful prosecution of the war.

Two months after the formation of the Caballero government, the CNT decided to join it. Once they had decided to take part in politics, the Anarchist leaders demanded no fewer than nine ministerial posts. After long and exhausting discussions, they finally reconciled themselves to accepting four. This cabinet reorganisation increased the authority of the Republican government, in which the whole of Spanish anti-fascist opinion was now represented.

The Fifth Regiment

With a realistic approach to the needs of the struggle, the Spanish Communist Party had begun to organise the masses for resistance against aggression from the very start of the insurrection. As early as July, in the courtyard of a Madrid monastery, the Communist Party formed the Fifth Regiment, heroic forerunner and cornerstone of the future People's Army of the Republic. It was called the *Fifth* Regiment because four regular army regiments had usually been stationed in the capital.

The Fifth Regiment was not exclusively Communist. It was anti-fascist. Its ranks were open to all working people who were willing to fight. This was shown by its political and social composition. Half its members were Communists or members of the United Socialist Youth; a quarter were Socialists; 15 per cent were Republicans, and the remainder were anti-fascists with no political affiliations.

The majority of its members came from the rural areas. Next in number were industrial workers, and after them came black-coated workers and intellectuals.

The core of the Fifth Regiment were the famous *Compañías de Acero* ("Companies of Steel"). These were made up of volunteers, "sound in body and bold in spirit" and vouched for by anti-fascist organisations. Their indomitable courage soon won them the love and admiration of all Republican Spain. The people sang of them:

En el crisol del Acero
se funden en un afán,
el campesino, el obrero,
el arisco guerrillero
y el invicto capitán*

(Luis de Tapia)

* In the crucible of the "Steel", forged by a single passion, are the peasant, the worker, the fierce guerrilla fighter and the dauntless captain.

The Fifth Regiment's formation was endorsed by the mass of the people, who flocked to its barracks to demand a place in the ranks of its fighters. In the first months of 1937, the Fifth Regiment of the People's Militia had 70,000 combatant soldiers.

It was no accident that it attracted such support. The militia were ready to give their lives; but they demanded a capable, responsible leadership, organisation and discipline. That was what drew them to the Fifth Regiment.

The workers wanted the improvisation of the early days to be brought to an end. They turned to those who showed that they knew how the war should be waged, to those who with their own daily example were striving for the unification of the confused patchwork of militia groups and columns belonging to the various organisations and political parties, each acting according to its own whim.

As well as combatant units, the Fifth Regiment formed others. Since there was nothing, and everything had to be created from scratch, it formed its own transport, communications, medical and supply services. It organised hospitals, convalescent homes, sanatoriums, homes for war orphans, child welfare services, tailoring shops, military training establishments and schools to abolish illiteracy.

Young peasants who, before July, had handled only farm implements, passed out of the Fifth Regiment's training schools as pilots, tankmen and gunners.

From the ranks of the Fifth Regiment came the people's first military leaders, men like Lister, Modesto and many others, who later became the best leading cadres of the People's Army. Battling heroically at their side were many professional soldiers who had remained loyal to the Republic and who were given positions of command by the Fifth Regiment.

From its very inception the Fifth Regiment had political commissars in all its units. They were an expression of the democratic, revolutionary character of the Army that was being formed.

The commissars forged a new kind of discipline – a discipline that was conscious and voluntary, and therefore firmer and better than a discipline imposed from above.

As representatives of the People's Front, the commissars had the mission of educating the fighters in the spirit of anti-fascism. They backed up the authority of the commanders and saw to it that the rank and file were properly armed, fed and clothed.

The commissar was the friend, counsellor and comrade of the soldier; it was he who could restore order when all the rest had lost their heads. He was "the first to advance and the last to retreat".

Working and fighting in the Fifth Regiment alongside the workers and peasants were many intellectuals, the foremost writers and poets of the Republic who placed their talents at the service of the people's cause. The Fifth Regiment issued a number of publications; every unit had its own newspaper. The daily *People's Militia* attained a circulation of 75,000 copies.

The Fifth Regiment had a Moorish battalion, composed of Moroccans who had remained loyal to the Republic or had come over to its side.

In October, when fascism was tightening its ring of fire round the capital, the Fifth Regiment formed four Shock Battalions for the Defence of Madrid. By November, people in the capital were singing:

Cos los cuatro batallones
que a Madrid están defendiendo,
va toda la flor de España
la flor mas roja del pueblo.*

The names adopted by these magnificent battalions were inspired by great epics of the international working class, expressing the universal character of the Spanish people's struggle – "Paris Commune", "Leningrad", "Kronstadt", "Madrid".

In October the government issued a decree militarising all

* With the four battalions which are defending Madrid, goes the flower of Spain, the reddest flower of the people.

militia units and calling up men between the ages of 20 and 45 inclusive. The party committees in each unit were disbanded and political leadership was taken over by the commissars. For this purpose a General War Commissariat was formed, under the direction of the Socialist leader Alvarez del Vayo; this furnished the different units with hundreds of political commissars – Communists, Socialists, members of the United Socialist Youth and trade unionists.

Amid the fire of battle, during the defence of Madrid, the first Mixed Brigades were formed. These were regular units of the new People's Army.

Their basis was the Fifth Regiment with all its units, its commanders and its services.

The seeds of heroism and discipline sown by the Fifth Regiment thrust down deep roots in the newly-born People's Army of the Republic.

The Heroic Youth

The great mass of both the militia and the People's Army consisted of young workers and peasants. From the first day of the insurrection, the younger generation of workers, peasants and students flocked rapidly and eagerly to bar the road to fascism.

The strength of the working youth had grown enormously thanks to the unity that had found expression in the United Socialist Youth, which placed itself at the head of the entire younger generation and was able to mobilise them for the struggle.

From the ranks of the young people emerged splendid airmen, sailors, tank-crews and anti-tank troops. Holding positions of command in the People's Army were quite a number of officers and commissars who had scarcely reached their twenties; but they had been trained in revolutionary struggle by the United Socialist Youth.

The deeds of these young people, and the names of heroes and heroines among them, resounded throughout all Spain:

Lina Odena, a young working girl from Catalonia who gave her life fighting in the Sierra de Granada; Andrés Martín, commander of the Pasionaria Battallion who died at Oropesa; Antonia Portero who fell in the Guadarrama mountains; the young Socialist commissar Belmonte, and others too numerous to mention.

At the beginning of the war there were many local branches of the United Socialist Youth which held meetings with only one item on the agenda – “Going to the Front” – and which closed their branch premises after the meeting because every single member, without exception, was joining the militia.

During those war years the young people of the Spanish Republic were tempered and steeled in unity, in political action, in battle within the ranks of the People's Army.

Madrid under Air Attack

The German General Sperrle, who commanded the Condor Legion, wrote in the journal *Die Wehrmacht*: “Our bombers had the task of opening up the way to Madrid and demoralising the city so that Franco's troops could enter. But it was not possible to get the troops to take the route we showed them.”

On October 27 the fascists began the savage bombing of Madrid's population. Junkers, Heinkels and Capronis sowed death and destruction throughout the capital. The densely-populated districts of Embajadores, Tetúan de las Victorias, Atoche and Cuatro Caminos were the worst hit. Hospitals, schools, museums, libraries and artistically valuable monuments and buildings were the favourite targets of the Nazi pilots.

The Carmen Market was burned to the ground in a raid on November 17 that went on from 9 p. m. until 2 a. m.

It was estimated that the number of air raid victims in November alone amounted to over 1,000 in Madrid. The streets were filled with homeless families carrying their pathetic household belongings. Orphaned children were crying for their mothers.

Louis Delapré, a French newspaperman whose passenger aircraft was brought down over Madrid by a German plane, wrote: “Christ said ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do’. But these men will not be forgiven, for they know very well what they are doing.”

The militiamen of the Fifth Regiment took care to protect the works of art in the Prado Museum, the Duke of Alba's palace, the National Library, the San Fernando Academy, the Museum of Modern Art and other private and public collections. The Fifth Regiment saved Madrid's art and scientific treasures from the fascist bombs and removed them to safety.

A joint letter was addressed to the Fifth Regiment by the leading scholars and men of letters of Madrid, among whom were the well-known physicist Duperier, Pío de Río Ortega, director of the Cancer Institute, the poet Antonio Machado, Enrique Moles, Antonio Madinaveitia, José Moreno Villa and Miquel Prados Such. “Never”, they said, “have we felt so proud to be Spaniards as now, when we see how, in order to preserve our art and scientific treasures, the militia who are risking their lives for the good of Spain are carefully saving our libraries and laboratory equipment from the incendiary bombs dropped by foreign aircraft on our cultural institutions.”

No Pasarán!

On November 6, 1936, towards evening, the decisive stage of the Battle of Madrid began.

The carrying out of the main offensive was entrusted to the so-called Army of the Tagus, commanded by General Varela. This army, after having captured Toledo on September 27, had been reorganised and prepared for the attack on the capital.

As a gesture of defiance to the international working-class movement and to the friendship and admiration felt by the Spanish people towards the Soviet Union, the fascists had

announced that they would enter Madrid on November 7, the 19th anniversary of the October Revolution.

The enemy's near approach increased the demoralisation of those persons who lacked faith in the working people's ability to fight and who were inclining towards the idea of surrender. President Azaña had left the Oriente Palace weeks before and had installed himself in Barcelona. One minister suggested that Madrid should be evacuated, with a view to recapturing it later. And although this preposterous proposal was not accepted, the government decided in any case to withdraw to Valencia.

No doubt this decision was necessary, in order to provide the government with the freedom of action which it would have lacked in a besieged city. What was regrettable was the disorderly and precipitate manner in which it was carried out.

During the night of November 6-7, a Junta of Defence was formed in Madrid. It consisted of representatives of the People's Front, and its President was General Miaja. Of its eight councils, the Communist Party and the United Socialist Youth assumed responsibility for the two which were the most important in those conditions. Antonijo Mije, a member of the Communist Party's Political Bureau, became responsible for the war council, and Santiago Carrillo, General Secretary of the United Socialist Youth, took charge of public order.

The fascists, and the defeatists too, imagined that with the government's departure and the presence of Moorish troops and Foreign Legionaries at the gates of Madrid, the Republican resistance would crumble. To their astonishment, exactly the opposite happened.

Writing of the defence of Madrid, Antonio Machado said: "In times of danger the gentry invoke the motherland - and sell it; the people do not even name it, but they ransom and rescue it with their blood".

The people of Madrid, standing shoulder to shoulder, formed one immense barrier and marched out and took their places in the trenches round the city.

"Madrid will be Spain's Verdun!" "They shall not pass!" proclaimed the Communist Party, and those slogans were taken up by men and women from every walk of life, who offered their lives to save the city.

And the fascists did not pass.

They were unable to enter Madrid.

On the afternoon of November 7, amid the noise of an air raid, a memorable meeting, called by the Communists, was held in the Monumental Cinema to commemorate the 19th anniversary of the October Socialist Revolution of 1917. All the members of the Defence Junta, together with representatives from every anti-fascist organisation, took part.

A few weeks earlier, Madrid had still given the impression of a city unaware of the seriousness of the war, with houses being built just as if things were normal and with cafés, theatres and cinemas crowded daily. Now the city summoned up its full fighting strength and the whole of its resources.

Eagerly and enthusiastically the population responded to the call of the working-class and anti-fascist organisations. The gale grew to hurricane force.

The streets were filled with workers. They went into the squares, the barracks, cinemas, railway stations and airfields, into places of entertainment and the courtyards of blocks of flats, rousing everyone. Within a matter of hours, hundreds of meetings were organised, ranging from big ones like that in the Monumental Cinema to small impromptu ones held at street corners.

The local headquarters of the political parties and anti-fascist organisations swarmed with people young and old, men and women demanded a rifle or a shovel, a place in the ranks of the militia or in the fortification brigades. The people of Madrid sensed that the defence of their city depended on themselves, and they proudly accepted that great responsibility.

In those crucial days when the future of Spain and her people hung in the balance, tens of thousands of the best fighters asked to be admitted to membership of the Communist Party. At that grim period the membership of the Party in Madrid increased fourfold.

What were they looking for in the Communist Party?

A post in the most dangerous part of the fighting line. That was what the Communist Party offered its members. At a meeting in the Monumental Cinema on October 23, José Díaz, general secretary of the Party, declared: "From the Party's top leadership down to the humblest rank-and-filer, we pledge every last drop of our blood for the final defeat of fascism, the enemy of mankind". He went on: "When our people are told 'That hill must be captured' – well, it must be captured. And the Communists must be the first to advance, for the moment you become a Communist your life is no longer your own. It is placed at the service of the workers, of the civil war, of the revolution."

The workers could see for themselves that these were not empty words. They saw that the Communists were always the first to volunteer for the most perilous tasks. They saw José Díaz, Dolores Ibárruri and other Communist leaders visiting the front lines, encouraging and organising the militiamen at the most critical moments, risking their own lives. They saw how Communist military commanders and the units led by them were always the first to take the brunt of the enemy attacks and lead offensive operations.

A number of battalions, before they left for the front, were assembled in one of Madrid's cinemas to see a show. There was nothing frivolous or cheap about the film they watched with such close attention. It was called *We from Kronstadt*. Watching it, the defenders of Madrid learned from the workers of Petrograd how enthusiasm can make up for the lack of arms and equipment when men are fighting for a just and noble cause. The film showed how the sailors of Kronstadt had stopped enemy tanks by throwing hand-grenades at their caterpillar tracks.

The lesson bore fruit.

Shortly afterwards, at the front near Usera, a Spanish sailor named Antonio Coll scrambled out of the trenches and went to meet the Italian tanks that were advancing on his sector, destroying the two leading ones with grenades and causing the rest to retreat.

At Moncloa a peasant lad, Eleuterio Cornejo, leaped over the parapet and hurled hand-grenades at an oncoming tank, stopping the enemy attack. Other courageous fighters, like Carrasco, Grau and dozens more, performed similar feats.

"Tank-hunters" was the name given by the people of Madrid to these heroes, whose number was soon legion. The Fifth Regiment formed anti-tank companies – named after Antonio Coll – and these made up for the lack of anti-tank guns by destroying Italian and German tanks with bombs, sticks of dynamite or bottles of petrol.

"Better to be the Widows of Heroes than the Wives of Cowards"

The period of the defence of Madrid was a fruitful and intensive training school, worth years at a university. Men's stature grew and developed in days, in hours. Almost overnight stonemasons and carpenters were transformed into military commanders, engineering workers were transformed into ministers. Youngsters and women who had never made a speech in their lives became fiery orators. Unskilled labourers and housewives showed splendid organisational ability. Everyone competed in unselfishness and patriotic fervour.

The people of Madrid set a wonderful example of creative ability and initiative by making their threatened city a model of order and discipline, in which every citizen had a war job and carried it out.

In the factories, workshops and offices, the workers stayed on after hours to do their military training. Tenement-dwellers formed local committees to organise and train all their residents in the use of arms.

Speaking to the women of Madrid at one of the huge meetings held during November, Dolores Ibárruri said:

"You have shown yourselves capable of every sacrifice; now we must make the final effort. If necessary, follow

the example of the Soviet women, go and stand beside your menfolk, holding a rifle. With it you will be defending not only freedom and the Republic, but what is even nearer and dearer to you – the lives of your children. You will be fighting for a happy and prosperous Spain where castes will be abolished, where the people will be able to eat and work. I am sure that, feeling as you do in the very depths of your souls the need to smash fascism, you will do your utmost to be the widows of heroes rather than the wives of cowards!”

At Pasionaria’s call, thousands upon thousands of wives and mothers marched day after day through the streets in massive demonstrations, calling on the men to fight, offering to take over their jobs. “Better to be the widows of heroes than the wives of cowards!” – the heroic cry echoed from street to street, from square to square, thundering through the city’s foundations.

The leading foreign correspondents, disgusted with the lies being published in the reactionary world press about the situation in Madrid, signed a cable which was published by *L’Oeuvre* in Paris. It said: “The discipline of the militiamen and the morale of the civilian population are in no way shaken. Men and women are ready to defend Madrid at the front and in the rear. There have been, it is true, women’s demonstrations. Their cry, however, has not been ‘Surrender!’ but ‘Every man to the front!’”

In November 1936 these determined, ordinary women, like the heroic womenfolk of the Paris Commune, strove and worked to build fortifications, took over men’s jobs in the factories, worked in the hospitals and field-kitchens, helped in the evacuation of children, and carried coffee and refreshments to the front and to the fortification brigades. They took part in the rationing committees and in all social and administrative work.

The savage crimes committed by the fascists in the towns and villages they had occupied had shown the women what they could expect if fascism were allowed to pass.

It is said that when Napoleon I expressed his dislike of women who talked politics, Mme. de Stael said to him: “In a country where women’s heads are cut off, it is natural that they should try to find out why.”

On November 8 the fascist armies attacked through University City and the Casa de Campo. But they came up against a veritable wall composed of tens of thousands of Madrid workers, militiamen and soldiers, defending their city. The fascist attack was paralysed.

By tram-car and motor lorry, by the underground railway and on foot, the people of Madrid went to the outskirts to fight or to dig trenches. More than one driver, on arriving at the terminus, handed over his driving crank to a woman and stayed to fight – another militiaman to defend the Republic.

A fraternal column arrived in Madrid from the people of Catalonia. It had been organised by the United Socialist Party and the Anarchists of Barcelona, and was led by the CNT leader Bucnaventura Durruti, who fell in battle a few days after reaching Madrid.

Madrid won its battle in November. The fascist troops, who sustained heavy losses, failed to enter the city.

Hitler and Mussolini decided to recognise the Franco government even though it was a government without a capital.

Guadalajara

One of the people’s great achievements in the thirty-two months of the national revolutionary war was the creation of the People’s Army. Starting from nothing, demonstrating their organising capacity and creative ability, they first of all formed the armed columns, the militia, and then after a few months built a real regular army which was able not merely to resist fascist aggression but to undertake offensive operations. Passing through severe trials and learning from their own mistakes, the people brought into being a powerful

defence weapon. The insurgents got a taste of the new Republican Army's strength when their efforts to advance on Madrid were defeated first at Majadahonda and then at Jarama.

The Italian fascists, annoyed by the defeat of their Spanish counterparts – for whom they did not conceal their contempt – decided to give Spain and the rest of the world an exhibition of their strength and strategic wisdom. In March 1937 the Italian Expeditionary Force, with its 50,000 men equipped with modern weapons and commanded by Italian army generals, initiated the fourth attack on Madrid, this time through Guadalajara. Relying on their lavish resources in men and arms, the Italian fascists announced that they would seize Madrid and bring down the Republic in a matter of days.

From the cruiser *Pola*, on which he was sailing to Libya, Mussolini addressed a message to his expeditionary force in which he said: "I am confident that our legionaries will smash the enemy's resistance. Let the legionaries know that hour by hour I am closely following their actions, which will end in victory."

The Duce's boasts ended in military disaster for his expeditionary corps. The People's Army did not simply halt the fascist offensive; it went over to the offensive and completely routed the four divisions, "Littorio", "Black Flame", "Black Feathers", and "God Wills", with their generals Bergonzoli, Roatta, Nuvolini and Coppi and the rest of the interventionists sent by Mussolini to destroy the democratic liberty of the Spanish people.

The heroic Republican Air Force, named by the people *La Gloriosa*, the 11th Division commanded by Enrique Lister, the International Brigades, the new Republican Army, struck a blow against fascism at Guadalajara which all the years that have passed have not been able to obliterate.

Soviet Solidarity

In its hour of greatest danger Madrid received help of inestimable value.

Streaking through the sky came aeroplanes which, for the first time, arrived not to shower death but to save the women and children of Madrid: Soviet *Chatos* and *Moscas*.* Rushing up to the rooftops, standing on balconies and at windows, the Madrileños cried: "They're ours this time!" and joyfully waved to the pilots.

In no other country of the world was the Spanish cause felt so deeply and passionately as in the Soviet Union.

Millions of workers had contributed within a few days to the solidarity fund launched in the Soviet Union. By the end of October the Spanish people had already received supplies to the value of 59,000,000 rubles, and money continued to be collected throughout the whole of the war.

Ships flying the hammer and sickle flag began to arrive in the Spanish ports with cargoes of clothing, foodstuffs, medical supplies and lubricants. Along the wharves of Barcelona and Alicante, people excitedly deciphered the Cyrillic characters on their bows, reading names like "Neva", "Zirianin" and "Turksib" which from then on were gratefully written on their hearts.

The Soviet Union, having made an open declaration in the Non-Intervention Committee that it reserved its full right to help the Spanish people, started to despatch the military supplies that were so sorely needed by the People's Army – and were denied them by the so-called democratic governments.

On behalf of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Stalin sent the following telegram to José Díaz:

"The working people of the Soviet Union, in helping the revolutionary masses of Spain to the best of their ability,

**Chato* in Spanish means "snub-nosed" and *mosca* means "a fly".

are doing no more than their duty. They are aware that the liberation of Spain from the oppression of the fascist reactionaries is not the private affair of the Spaniards but the common cause of all advanced and progressive mankind."

Twenty-five "I-15" planes appeared over Madrid early in November 1936, enabling the Spanish and Soviet airmen of *La Gloriosa* to strike back at the criminal Italian and German raiders.

In the same month the first fifty tanks arrived, and thenceforward the Republican infantry possessed a shield with which to advance and attack.

The Soviet volunteers who came to Spain, with their experience, the lessons they were able to teach and their exemplary courage, gave invaluable aid to the People's Army.

In a report given to the 18th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Marshal Rodion Malinovsky spoke of the aid rendered by the Soviet volunteers to the Spanish people. He said they had played an enormous part – as actual fighters, assistants of the Spanish Republican Command, participating in battles and operations and gaining great and well-merited prestige among the Spanish people.

The memory of the Soviet volunteers will live for ever in the hearts of the Spanish people.

From October 1936 onwards, hundreds of ships left Soviet ports carrying material expressions of Soviet generosity and kindness. A further example of the Soviet people's solidarity was the heroism of their merchant seamen in face of the piratical acts of the German and Italian fleets. Many Soviet ships were sunk, among the first being the glorious "Komsomol".

The solidarity of the U. S. S. R. aroused a wave of overwhelming friendship and gratitude among all Spaniards in Republican territory, whatever their social position or political standpoint. One of the most moderate Republican leaders, Diego Martínez Barrio, President of the Cortes (Parliament) admitted in 1937: "Without the help of the Soviet Union, our Republic would long have ceased to exist".

The International Brigades

On November 8, a column of men marched through the streets of Madrid on their way to the front. They were the first arrivals of the International Brigades, anti-fascists from many lands who had come to offer their help and their lives to the Spanish people.

There was the French-Belgian Battalion, named after the Paris Commune and commanded by the French army officer Dumont. With it marched the German "Edgar André" Battalion led by Hans Kahle, formerly an officer in the imperial Prussian army. In the first world war these two men had been in opposing trenches. In Madrid they fought side by side on the barricades against fascism.

The international volunteers were welcomed with indescribable emotion by the people of Madrid.

Madrid was no longer alone!

Who were these volunteers?

Quite a number of reactionary politicians and historians have tried to draw a parallel between the presence of foreign troops on Franco's side and that of the International Brigades in the People's Army. Any objective examination of the facts makes nonsense of such a comparison.

On Franco's side, as we have already shown, there were about 300,000 foreign troops, officers and men. The entire total of foreign volunteers who fought for the Republic was no more than 35,000 – one-tenth of that number.

On Franco's side there were complete units of the Italian and German armies.

The international volunteers frequently reached Spain after having overcome all manner of hardships, besides having had to evade the police on many occasions both in their own countries and at the frontiers they had to cross. The majority had been obliged to rely on the help of revolutionary and trade union organisations to meet the cost of their journey to Spain.

These volunteers – workers, peasants, clerks, students, intellectuals – arrived at the Spanish border armed with nothing.

ing but their enthusiasm and their passion for liberty and justice.

They were the truest representatives of international solidarity, the finest exponents of proletarian internationalism and the peoples' will to struggle against fascism.

Communists formed the essential core of the International Brigades. But along with them, socialists, democrats, Catholics, liberals, men of the most varied political viewpoints and religious or philosophical convictions came to fight in Spain.

From fifty-four countries the volunteers made their way to the Spanish frontier, asking to be allowed to take part in the struggle.

On October 22, the Republican government authorised the formation of the International Brigades.

On joining, the volunteers signed a declaration which ended with these words: "I have come here as a volunteer, and if necessary I will shed the last drop of my blood to safeguard the freedom of Spain and the whole world."

In Spain's grim battle, the steel was tempered that later formed the indestructible backbone of the French Resistance which fought the Nazi invaders. The commander of the 14th International Brigade, Colonel Dumont, was one of the earliest organisers of the groups of the F. T. P. (*Francs-Tireurs et Partisans*) in occupied France. Fabien, outstanding Resistance hero, was a lieutenant in the 14th Brigade. Colonel Rol-Tanguy, liberator of Paris, was one of its commissars; so was Pierre Rebiere, member of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party and leader of the F. T. P. in Burgundy, who was shot by the Germans in 1942.

These men have a place of honour in one of the most heroic episodes in French history. Their names, with those of other fighters in the International Brigades – like Hans Beimler, Luigi Longo, Major Fort, Dr. Domanski-Dubois, Ralph Fox, Vidali (Carlos), Swierczewski (Walter), Stern (Kleber), Mate Zalka (Lukács), Di Vittorio, Pietro Nenni, Brugeret, Franz Dahlem, Julius Deutsch, Nino Nanetti, the Algerian captain Oussidoum and so many others – are also

indelibly inscribed in one of the most glorious pages of the history of the Spanish people.

In October 1938 the Republican government ordered the withdrawal from Spain of the volunteers of the International Brigades. This was done in order to strike a political blow at the sanctimonious hypocrites of "Non-Intervention" who were shouting about the presence of "foreigners" on both sides.

On October 28, 1938, the last military parade of the International Brigades was held. As the volunteers marched through the streets of Barcelona, the weeping populace broke through the police cordons to embrace them and to tell them that they would never be forgotten, that the debt of love and blood that was owed to them would be remembered for ever.

Certain names in the geography of Spain, having witnessed the heroism and self-sacrifice of the fighters of the International Brigades, have acquired a new meaning: Casa de Campo, University City, Las Rozas, Jarama, Guadalajara, Brunete, Villanueva de la Cañada, Belchite, Quinto, Pozoblanco, Ebro. No one can think of these places without emotion, remembering the International Brigades, 5,000 of whose soldiers remain among us for ever, leaving on the horizon of our motherland a trail of glory and courage.

Solidarity Campaigns

The solidarity of the peoples of the world with the Spanish Republican cause took the most varied forms: political campaigns against Non-Intervention; parliamentary action, meetings, demonstrations, strikes; great collections of money and medical supplies; the sending to Spain of ships, ambulances, lorries loaded with food and clothing; visits by democratic personalities to Republican territory as an expression of solidarity. In nearly every country of the world, Spanish aid committees sprang up; these were extremely broad in character, embracing working-class and anti-fascist organis-

ations, trade unions, and individuals prominent in the world of science and the arts.

Aid for Spain was a great banner of unity in the broad international working class and democratic movement. The example of unity set by the Spanish fighters inspired communists, socialists and democrats in other countries to unite.

And in many European countries, the unity that began and developed in the course of the movement to aid Spain was of great assistance later on in the development of national unity within the resistance movements against Nazi domination.

5

A democracy of a new type

In the midst of the war against Spanish reaction and German and Italian armed intervention, the mass of the people, led by the working class, were gradually changing the face of the country. They were shattering what was left of the feudal chains, throwing wide the gateways to democracy, progress, culture and well-being for the working people. They were making profound democratic changes in the political, economic and social life of the Republican zone.

The character of the Second Spanish Republic which had come into existence in 1931 was profoundly modified, to the point of becoming a democratic and parliamentary republic of a new type – the forerunner of what the modern people's democracies, which arose in Europe as a result of the defeat of fascism in the Second World War, were in their first stage.

In the Republican zone the Spanish people, for the first time in their history, built a solid and effective democratic system, in which the old caste privileges were done away with. The domination of the financial and landowning oligarchy, the Church and the Army over the country's political and economic life disappeared. The land, a proportion of basic industry, transport and the banks passed into the hands of the democratic State. The national aspirations of Catalonia and Euzkadi (the Basque Country) were fulfilled. This democratic system was based on the participation of the

masses of the people in the leadership of the political, economic and cultural life of the country, and on the armed people, on the People's Army.

People's Power

The democratic republic which came into being in Spain during the war had a deep social content that made it very different from the general run of bourgeois republics. Nor was it a socialist republic, for capitalist relations of production continued to operate. It was, in certain respects, a new, original historical experience.

It represented the power of the workers, the peasants, the urban petty bourgeoisie and sections of the middle bourgeoisie.

The working class was the main, decisive force. Nevertheless, the working class was unable to exercise full and consistent leadership because there were ideological and organisational divisions within it which were not overcome and which had a harmful influence throughout the entire war.

The revolutionary changes of a democratic character that were carried out in the Republican zone were indissolubly linked with the armed struggle of the working class and the whole people against Spanish reaction and Italian and German fascism.

The war and the revolution were two sides of the same coin. The winning of the war would have meant decisive victory for the Spanish democratic revolution.

There could be no task more revolutionary, therefore, than that of winning the war. At the same time, the democratic revolutionary changes were a great stimulus, inspiring the people to fight and giving them the strength to endure every sacrifice.

The formation of the government of Largo Caballero in September 1936 had opened up a new stage in the political life of the Republic. The previous governments had been

petty bourgeois in character; this one was a genuine People's Front government, in which the working class had a role of prime importance.

Furthermore, the working class was no longer represented in the government only by the Socialists, who were adept, when in power, at carrying out the policy of the bourgeoisie. Nor were the Anarchists – the upholders of petty-bourgeois conceptions – the genuine representatives of the working class. What introduced a really new factor was the presence of the Communist Party in the government.

Through its ideology, its policy, its composition, its very nature, the Spanish Communist Party was the embodiment of the leading role which rightly belonged to the working class in the fight against fascism and in the democratic revolution.

In contrast with the doubts, the hesitations, the waverings and the confusion that beset the other parties in face of the extreme complexity and merciless severity of the war, the Communists had a clear vision of the policy that had to be followed, both as regards the war itself and also the democratic changes that were most urgently needed. And they possessed not only this clear vision but also the indomitable will to fulfil their duty to the people, to the working class.

The Communists accepted no distinction between words and deeds. The aims they had announced to the people when they were still outside the government were the selfsame aims they were determined to achieve once they were in the government – by seeking an understanding with the other parties of the People's Front and relying, above all, on the strength of the mass movement.

The presence of the Spanish Communist Party in a coalition government along with representatives of the Republican petty bourgeoisie and middle bourgeoisie and a Catholic group so important as the Basque Nationalist Party, was something new in the history of the Communist Parties. The Spanish Communist Party demonstrated in practice that in certain circumstances such collaboration in the government

could open up new opportunities to serve the cause of the working people. This experience on the part of Spain was of great value for France and other European countries, particularly during the Second World War.

The participation of the Communist Party in the Republican government was the political prerequisite that made it possible to tackle – in a genuine and effective way and in deeds, not merely in words – the democratic transformations some of which had been on the agenda in Spain for more than a century.

Agrarian Reform

In the first days of the war, a group of Communist leaders went into one of the barracks in Madrid to call on the soldiers (whose fascist officers had fled) to join in the war against fascism. Some of the men appeared doubtful. Eventually, one of them stood up and asked:

“What about the land? What’s going to happen about that?”

When the Communists replied that the Republic was going to give the land to the peasants, and explained that in order to defend the land the fascists had to be defeated, all the soldiers as one man went off to the front.

This incident, which was repeated in one form or another throughout Spain, showed the extent to which agrarian reform, in addition to being an essential demand of the democratic revolution, was also a direct and pressing necessity for the successful prosecution of the war itself.

It was in September 1936 that the new government was formed in which the Communists took part. On October 7 the Communist Minister of Agriculture, Vicente Uribe, signed the historic decree which, for the first time in Spanish history, solved the problem of the land for the benefit of those who toiled on it.

The decree ordered the expropriation, in favour of the state and without compensation, of all rural estates belonging

to persons who had taken part directly or indirectly in the rebellion (or to members of their families), regardless of the size of the holding or the manner in which it was worked.

Over 13½ million acres were taken over in this way and distributed among more than 300,000 families of agricultural workers and peasants to be cultivated either individually or collectively.

One-third of those who benefited from the agrarian reform already had some land and received sufficient to make up a total of 15 hectares (37 acres) – about the same as the standard individual plots handed over to the day-labourers and tenants who had previously had no land of their own.

The decree of October 7 was of tremendous importance. In actual fact it expropriated the property of the big land-owners in the Republican zone and fundamentally changed the character of relations in the countryside. It gave the land to those who tilled it, laid the basis for a strong, healthy rural economy and opened up favourable prospects for Spain’s future industrialisation.

The decree of October 7 was the fulfilment of the Communist watchword: “Neither hunger for bread nor hunger for land in the countryside!”

Its outcome was bound to be of historic importance. The Spanish agricultural workers and peasants did not receive land from the hands of the bourgeoisie but from the hands of the working class – on the initiative of the Communist Party. They saw with their own eyes that the satisfaction of their age-long desire for land was due to the presence of the Communist Party in the government. The agrarian reform reinforced the alliance between the working class and the peasants.

With rifles in their hands, the peasants, at the same time as they were fighting against fascism, were also defending the land they had received from the Republic.

“I am fighting”, wrote one of them, “so that my mother shall never again have to suffer what she went through in the past, when she didn’t have even a cradle to rock her

babies in. I am fighting so that at last she can have a bit of land and be able to say: This is mine."

The situation in the fascist-occupied zone was the exact opposite of this. On September 25, 1936, a few days before the Republican decree of October 7 was issued, the fascists took a decision on agriculture which completely wiped out even the very modest reforms enacted by the Republic before the outbreak of war. It ordered the return to its former owners of all land on which peasant families had been settled, and the eviction of those peasant families. Tenants and share-croppers were ordered to pay up all arrears of rent.

This was the start of a savage counter-reform that was carried out in all the fascist-occupied territory. Whenever Franco's troops entered any place, the aristocrats got their feudal estates back, the peasants were evicted, ruined and in many cases imprisoned or shot.

In the Republican zone, the communist-led Ministry of Agriculture not only distributed the land but provided peasants with draught animals, implements, machinery, fertilizers, technical assistance, seed and credits – that is to say, with everything necessary for the effective cultivation of the land which they had received. Although the country's resources had to be devoted primarily to military expenditures, the Ministry of Agriculture nevertheless provided the peasants with over 200 million pesetas in loans.

At the same time a moratorium was declared on payments of rent for agricultural holdings, in preparation for an adjustment to wipe out the rent increases that had been imposed earlier.

The satisfaction of the peasants was expressed not only through their struggle at the front but also through their efforts to increase agricultural production. The womenfolk, who in many cases took over the jobs of the men at the front, did a magnificent job.

In spite of the war, over large expanses of the Republican zone, the sown area and the harvests of wheat and other crops increased from 1936 to 1937.

Real Democracy

One of the key problems of the democratic revolution in Spain was the national question. As regards Catalonia, this been resolved to some extent with the granting of the Statute of Autonomy in 1932. But this question remained very acute in relation to Euzkadi (the Basque Country), where there was the special feature that the national movement was headed by a Catholic party which had strongly opposed the secular articles in the Republican Constitution.

It was this which caused the Republicans and Socialists, neither of whom ever had a proper understanding of the national question, to turn a deaf ear to the Basque people's desire for autonomy, which they regarded as reactionary.

The Basque Statute that had been brought before the Cortes in 1933 had not even been debated.

Upon the outbreak of the fascist uprising, and in face of the brusque declarations of Spanish reaction which threatened to wipe out every trace of national rights for the Catalan and Basque peoples – as was subsequently done – the Basque Nationalist Party overcame its hesitations and took its stand in favour of the Republic.

On October 1, 1936, the Republican Cortes approved the Basque Statute and October 7, the first Autonomous Government of the Basque Country was formed with the head of the Basque Nationalist Party, José Antonio de Aguirre, as its President, and with the participation of the Republican parties, the Socialists and the Communists.

The experience of the war showed Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia (which at that time was suffering savage repression at the hands of the fascists) that their just national aspirations could be satisfied only along the path of Spain's democratic development and only to the extent that the working class exercised a big influence on the government of the country.

The 1931 Constitution had proclaimed the equality of rights as between men and women. But it was only during the war that, for the first time in Spain's history, women began to

feel themselves truly equal with men in various aspects of economic, political and cultural life.

Throughout the war women played a very important part, in many spheres taking the place of men who had gone to the front.

In Catalonia, for example, nine out of ten of all workers engaged in the production of ammunition and explosives were women.

On the farms, in the hospitals, in the schools and in many other domains, the part played by women was decisive.

Conscious of the force which the women represented, the Communist Party strove to develop the *Mujeres Antifascistas* (the organisation of anti-fascist women) into a great movement of the new Spain, drawing in all women who were ready to contribute to the defeat of fascism.

With regard to the problem of religion, the traditional alliance between the Church and the most brutal and oppressive groups of Spanish reaction, its direct collaboration with the organisers of the rebellion, and the utilisation of churches and monasteries as secret arms dumps and snipers' hide-outs against the people could not fail to exacerbate the anti-clericalism which had been so deeply rooted in the Spanish liberal movement since the 19th century and which was encouraged by the Anarchists and a section of the Socialist Party.

Nevertheless the facts, as objective observers have testified, show the falsehood of the stories put out by the fascists in their efforts to present their criminal war against the Spanish people as being necessary "to defend religion".

In the Basque Country, as has already been said, the fascists were waging war against a government headed by a Catholic and against troops a substantial percentage of whom were also Catholic.

In the rest of the Republican territory, the People's Front government took effective steps to ensure freedom of worship and respect for the religious beliefs of every individual.

It was no secret to anyone, for instance, that the Chief of Staff at the Central Headquarters of the People's Army, General Rojo, was a devout Catholic.

According to a statement made by the Catholic Minister of Justice, Manuel Irujo, to the press in Valencia on August 7, 1937, there were some 11,000 priests living freely in the Republican zone. Throughout the war, 2,500 priests were living in Madrid alone, and there was a similar number in Barcelona.

The Communist Party waged a consistent struggle against the anti-clerical excesses of uncontrolled elements and for the application of a truly democratic policy on the religious question, which would ensure respect for the convictions of religious people and freedom of worship.

On certain occasions Dolores Ibárruri, on behalf of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party, took personal steps to secure proper living conditions for communities of nuns who had had to leave their convents because of the war. Undoubtedly these facts have not been forgotten by at least some of them. The American writer Herbert Matthews, in his book *The Yoke and the Arrows*, states that during his stay in Spain in 1956 he was able to confirm the truth of this action by Dolores Ibárruri – an action which he, in his ignorance of Communist policy, described as "well-nigh incredible".

State Intervention

Because of the economic and social structure of the country and the actual conditions created by the war against fascism, the democratic revolution brought about during the course of the war could not confine itself to eliminating the vestiges of feudalism in the system of land ownership; it was necessarily obliged to attack monopoly capitalism too.

The social force served by the generals who rose in arms against the Republic was, of course, the landowning aristocracy; but it was also the magnates of monopoly capital, for both groups were more or less merged within the financial and landowning oligarchy. The Spanish people, in defending themselves against fascist aggression, were waging an armed

struggle against this oligarchy that was intent on imposing its absolute power on Spain.

The owners of the big industries and the banks, ranging themselves morally and also physically on the side of the fascists, abandoned their business concerns. It was essential to keep these going in order to meet the needs of the war and prevent economic life from coming to a standstill.

In many instances the workers themselves ensured the running of the enterprises, through their trade unions.

Experience very soon showed, however, that this method (quite apart from the excesses of the Anarchists, to which we shall refer later) did not yield good results. Enterprises run in this way concerned themselves only with narrow interests; there was no co-ordination and output dropped.

Furthermore, it was vitally necessary to organise a war industry, and this could only be done by the government.

Taking this experience into account, the Communist Party, on December 18, 1936, issued a programme known as *The Eight Conditions for Victory*. This proposed that the basic industries should be nationalised and that a Co-ordinating Council for Industry and the Economy should be formed.

Measures of this kind were essential to enable the government to organise and centralise the key branches of industry and transport, and build up a war industry capable of supplying the Army with the weapons and supplies it needed so urgently.

When this problem was tackled, the policy put forward by the Communist Party came up against very strong opposition – largely arising from the heterogeneous class composition of the Republican government.

Spain's two major industrial areas, the Basque Country and Catalonia, were in Republican territory. There thus existed the most favourable material conditions for rapidly creating an efficient war industry. This could have been achieved on the basis of agreements between the central government and the governments of the Basque Country and Catalonia, and of respect for the rights of the two nations.

Unfortunately, matters took a different course. In the

Basque Country the leadership of the Nationalist Party, anxious to serve the interests of the Basque big bourgeoisie, gave a very cold reception to the proposals for the nationalisation and co-ordination of the economy of the entire Republican zone; they refused to place the powerful industrial arsenal of the Basque Country – the blast furnaces of Sestao and Baracaldo and the engineering works of Santa Agueda, Recalde, Basauri, Florrieta, Zorroza, etc. – unconditionally in the service of the war.

In Catalonia the Anarchists had been carrying out a wild policy of "appropriating" and "collectivising" enterprises, which immediately lead to the disorganisation of the country's economic life without the slightest benefit to the workers; and then – with the support of the nationalist parties of Catalonia – they opposed the steps towards nationalisation and centralisation of the economy, thereby sabotaging the formation of a real war industry.

In spite of all this, and thanks to the efforts of the Spanish Communist Party and other forces of the People's Front, many of these difficulties were overcome and important measures were adopted by the Government.

State control over the Bank of Spain – brought under new administration in which the trade unions and political parties, as well as the State, were represented – virtually amounted to the nationalisation of this Bank.

A large part of the stocks and shares and other assets of the most important magnates of monopoly capital was expropriated on behalf of the State. The railways and other means of transport were nationalised in the interests of military requirements. And even though there was inordinate delay (until August 1938) the entire war industry was eventually brought under state control.

The Republican government adopted a whole series of social measures to benefit the workers both in industry and in agriculture and commerce. Although the needs of the war made it necessary for the workers to relinquish some of their gains, such as the 40-hour week and holidays with pay, (which were applied, however, in such a way as to affect

wages) the working class had never felt so sure of itself, so free, so much the master of its own destiny, as in those grim days of struggle and privation.

The Spanish Communist Party and the United Socialist Party of Catalonia strove to extend and consolidate the democratic gains of the working class, meanwhile opposing the demagoguery of Anarchist leaders who were putting forward demands that were inappropriate in time of war. To ensure that the needs of both front and rear were met, the two parties called on all working people to "produce more and better".

Thanks to the example of the Communists, the fighting spirit which existed at the front also spread to the production front.

In a considerable number of factories the workers organised "shock-brigades" to increase production.

The Cultural Revolution

In loyal Spain, culture ceased to be the exclusive patrimony of the well-to-do. The doors of the secondary schools and universities were thrown open to the ordinary people.

In the sphere of education, nearly 10,000 new schools were opened. Teachers' salaries – which had been so low as to be a traditional blot on Spanish society – were raised.

Six workers' colleges were formed, where young people from working-class and peasant families received a free secondary education. Their books were free, and moreover the young workers received the same wages as they had been getting in industry so that their families should not suffer. These colleges prepared the sons and daughters of working people for entrance to the university and other higher educational institutions. The majority of students were young working-class women and disabled soldiers.

The Communists, through the Ministry of Education, carried on an intensive campaign against illiteracy both at the front and in the rearward. They took the initiative in forming

the "Cultural Militia" that turned the barracks and trenches into one vast school and taught over 75,000 soldiers to read and write.

"You'll never believe it, Mother", wrote one soldier to his home, "but it is I, your son, writing to you. I can already use a pen – who would have thought it a few months ago! And I can read books. Mother, what joy! And do you know what I'm dreaming of doing when we've won the war? Of being a student..."

The pen and the book, together with the rifle, were the inseparable companions of the Republican soldier.

"The Spanish people", wrote the eminent British biologist Professor J. B. S. Haldane, "are breaking not only their political and economic chains, but their cultural ones too. They have a burning desire for education. They are learning to think clearly. And I believe that the descendants of the men who discovered the Americas will in the near future conquer new fields in the intellectual world."

Cultura Popular, *Film Popular*, the Barraca mobile theatre, the radio *Altavoz del Frente*, the Alerta youth movement and other organisations were extremely active throughout the war, bringing many aspects of Spanish culture to the army, the people and the youth.

Tremendous activity, too, was conducted by the Federation of Educational Workers and by the Alliance of Intellectuals for the Defence of Culture, in which three hundred of Spain's foremost writers and artists of the younger generation did very effective cultural work.

The Republic set up dozens of new libraries, both stationary and mobile ones, at the front and in the rear. Books, formerly a privilege of the wealthy, became the heritage of the whole people.

Leading figures in world culture, with few exceptions, used their prestige and authority on behalf of the Republican cause.

On November 28, 1936, Romain Rolland issued a call to French and world public opinion to act in support of the Spanish people. "Go to the help of Spain!" he wrote. "To

our help! To the help of yourselves! If you remain silent now, tomorrow it will be our own sons who will perish!"

The illustrious voice of Albert Einstein declared in July 1937: "The one thing which, in the circumstances of our epoch, can keep alive in us the hope of better times, is the heroic struggle of the Spanish people for freedom and human dignity."

A group of British and French intellectuals – among them H. G. Wells, Sir Normal Angell, David Low, Gilbert Murray, Elie Faure, Jean Cassou, André Gide, André Malraux, Jules Romain and Lucien Vogel – declared that the Spanish Republic was "fighting for the political and economic freedom of all the oppressed people of the earth".

Of the 418 authors who replied to a questionnaire issued by the League of American Writers, 410 affirmed their sympathy for the Republic, seven declared themselves neutral, and only one proclaimed himself on the side of fascism.

From Hollywood a letter was sent to Dolores Ibárruri, which read: "To receive personal greetings from one who has become a living symbol of the workers' struggle for democracy and freedom is an honour which we screen artists sincerely appreciate. We hope that the efforts of the Spanish people, aided by all friends of Spanish democracy, will bring speedy victory to Spain." This was signed by Franchot Tone, Robert Montgomery, James Cagney, Fredric March, Joan Crawford, Sylvia Sydney, Bette Davis, Miriam Hopkins, Nancy Carroll and Gale Sondergaard.

Notwithstanding the official attitude of the Vatican, noted Catholic writers such as François Mauriac, Jacques Maritain and Georges Bernanos denounced Franco's crimes.

An International Writers' Congress was held in Valencia in July 1937, in which representatives from twenty-eight countries took part. These included Gustav Regler, Theodor Balk, Ludwig Renn and Anna Seghers (Germany); Maria Grenmechliva, Kristo Beleyev and Ludmila Lvanov (Bulgaria); José Mancisidor and Octavio Paz (Mexico); Julian Benda, André Malraux and André Chamson (France); Alexei Tolstoy, Ilya Ehrenburg, Vsevolod Vishnevsky and Mikhail

Koltsov (U. S. S. R.); Egon Erwin Kisch (Czechoslovakia); José Bergamín and Rafael Alberti (Spain); John Dos Passos and Ernest Hemingway (U. S. A.); Martin Andersen Nexø (Denmark); Valentine Ackland, Edgell Rickword, Stephen Spender and Sylvia Townsend Warner (Britain).

Phoney Revolutions

The achievement of the democratic revolution clashed not only with the resistance of the bourgeois politicians, who refused to recognise the new role of the masses of the people in national life; it also came up against the irresponsible counter-revolutionary activities of the Anarchists, who in the name of "libertarian communism" set up a dictatorship of their own in those regions where they were strong enough to do so, notably in Aragón.

Instead of carrying out agrarian reform for the benefit of the peasants, the Anarchists imposed compulsory "collectivisation". This involved the pillaging of peasant holdings, the seizure of the peasants' crops and possessions, obligatory work under the direction of irresponsible and all-powerful "committees", the banning of all workers' and democratic organisations that did not submit to the dictatorship of the FAI (the Iberian Anarchist Federation) and, in some cases, brutally repressive measures against the peasants.

In Catalonia the Anarchists took advantage of the weakness and passivity of the autonomous government to apply their methods of "forcible collectivisation" in industry, seizing the stock of many small shopkeepers and artisans. At the same time, by agreement with the embassies of imperialist powers, they provided guards to protect some of the main undertakings belonging to foreign monopoly capital.*

In the enterprises which the Anarchists took over, production met neither the needs of the war nor those of the

* *La C. N. T. en la revolución española* ("The C. N. T. in the Spanish Revolution") by J. Peiro.

general consumer – but only the shady speculations of irresponsible elements. Demagogic measures were imposed, such as “equal pay” for technicians, skilled workers and unskilled labourers. All incentives were suppressed and demoralisation spread among the workers.

At the front, and, to be more precise, in Aragón, the “Anarchist revolution” consisted in refusing to build a People’s Army and holding on to the greater part of the arms available, keeping them in the rear in preparation for an internal uprising against the Republic of the People’s Front.

The continuation of this situation, which was fraught with grave danger for the Republic, was mainly due to the mistaken policy of Largo Caballero, who was under the evil influence of a group of trouble-makers in his immediate circle, like General Asensio, Baraibar, Araquistáin and others.

The Prime Minister did not take energetic steps to ensure that the People’s Army, which had been formed *de facto* in Madrid, was organised in the rest of the Republican zone. He failed to set up a unified command to direct the war on all fronts. He did not check the excesses of the “uncontrolled elements” in the rear, nor purge the state apparatus of enemies and spies.

He did not exercise effective power over the whole of Republican territory, which was split up into separate cantons and in which the Anarchist dictatorship of the “Council of Aragón” was a law unto itself.

The fall of Málaga, which took place on February 8, 1937, sounded the alarm to the people, warning them that the road which Largo Caballero was following was leading to defeat.

On February 14, a quarter of a million people joined in a demonstration in Valencia, demanding that the government should adopt the plan of action proposed by the Communist Party to bring about a fundamental change in the situation at the front and in the rear.

But instead of introducing changes in his policy as the people were demanding and as the situation imperatively required, Largo Caballero was impelled by his advisers towards an open split of the working-class and democratic forces.

Shut up in his Ministry and cut off from the people, Largo Caballero failed to realise that his prestige among the workers was declining and that he was becoming isolated in his own party.

He had always considered that the Communist Party counted for nothing in Spanish politics. When it became clear that the Communist Party’s influence was growing day by day, he still remained deaf to the advice of the Communists, who were trying to help him rectify his policy. He slid further down the slippery slope of anti-communism and came more and more under the influence of the Anarchist leaders.

In this way, Largo Caballero let himself be dazzled by the Anarchist mirage of a “trade union government” to be formed by the UGT (which he controlled) and the Anarchist-led CNT. By this means the People’s Front government would be destroyed and the Communists would be removed from power.

This proposal of a “trade union government”, which would have given the trade unions, as if they were a new Saturn, “the mission of swallowing up political parties”, would have meant not only the destruction of the People’s Front but also an end to the unity of action of the working class; it would have been a death blow to the war and the revolution.

The tragic effect on the anti-fascist cause of Largo Caballero’s *laissez-faire* attitude towards the Anarchist excesses became clear when a counter-revolutionary putsch took place in Barcelona on May 3, 1937. The political leaders of this putsch were the Trotskyite elements of the POUM (*Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista*) and the “special groups” of the FAI. But behind them were fascist agents, who held important posts in the Trotskyist-Anarchist organisations in Catalonia. And it was Franco (according to a coded telegram sent by Hitler’s Ambassador in Salamanca, von Faupel) who instructed his agents to provoke an armed uprising.

The putschists and Franco against did not succeed in getting the working-class rank and file of the CNT behind them. After some days of fighting, the counter-revolutionary

attack was put down on May 8, and Republican law and order were restored, thanks to the resolute struggle of the members of the United Socialist Party of Catalonia, the Catalan UGT and the United Socialist Youth of Barcelona.

The failure of the putsch revealed the decline in Anarchist influence and the strengthening of the United Socialist Party of Catalonia. This created better conditions for working-class and democratic unity in Catalonia.

Firm in their struggle against the traitors who had taken up arms to serve Franco's plans, the Communists simultaneously made the greatest efforts to improve their relations with those workers who were under Anarchist influence and to strengthen the unity between the UGT and the CNT.

The defeat of the putsch made it possible to improve the political atmosphere in Catalonia and to bring about a considerable increase in Catalonia's contribution to the common struggle against fascism.

But the putsch had demonstrated the urgent need to put an end to the disastrous policy which Largo Caballero was applying as Prime Minister and Minister of War.

To have continued along that road would have meant heading for defeat.

The Communist Party decided to put the need for a political change squarely before the people. Its voice was heard and understood by the masses, and this fact brought pressure to bear on the other parties of the People's Front.

And when the Communist Ministers stated that they could no longer serve in a government that refused to carry out a genuine war policy, the Socialist Party declared that it was impossible to govern without Communist participation, and the government as a whole was obliged to resign.

6

Anti-fascist unity and the war

Unity was the key to the war. The ability to defend Madrid, to create an army, to defeat the Italians at Guadalajara and to carry through the democratic revolution was due above all to the fighting unity of thousands upon thousands of men and women belonging to different anti-fascist parties and organisations. To preserve that unity, to broaden and strengthen it, was political task No. 1 if the war was to be waged successfully; but it was extraordinarily complicated and difficult task.

Contradictions

This unity embraced different classes and strata of Spanish society (workers, peasants, intellectuals, the petty bourgeoisie, the middle bourgeoisie, salaried employees and civil servants) and the nationalities of Catalonia and the Basque Country. All were joined in the common struggle against fascism, but at the same time there were differences and contradictions among them which could not be made to disappear and which, at certain moments, came to the surface creating obstacles to the defence of the Republic.

Unity, therefore, was not a spontaneous process. It could only be the outcome of constant political struggle, firmly and flexibly carried out both within the government and among the common people.

The parts played by the different sectors combined in the People's Front could not be identical. It was enough to look at Madrid, to talk to the leaders who had come to the fore in battle, to enquire who occupied the key posts in the war, to be convinced that *the working class* – not because of anyone's personal whim but because of the logic of events – was the iron core around which the other elements of the democratic coalition were grouped. The working class was the backbone which kept the people's resistance erect.

Unfortunately the working class was divided.

And a result of this division was that the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois sectors were able to exert an influence on the government's policy out of all proportion to their real strength in the country. This was also true of their representatives in the government.

To carry out the policy which was essential in the interest of the people and the needs of the anti-fascist war, and to ensure that vitally necessary measures were adopted, the Communist Party could not act alone. It had to convince the other parties of the People's Front that this policy and these measures were necessary. It had to achieve their support in a coalition government in which it was in a minority. It had to overcome the obstacles and the resistance which the other sectors constantly put up. And all this had to be done without breaking the unity of the People's Front. Moreover, it had to be done while strengthening that unity as far as possible, relying above all on the support and the mobilisation of the vast masses of people at the front in the rear.

This process was inevitably complicated, difficult and often slow.

A typical example is what happened in the case of the Caballero government. Its mistaken war policy weakened the people's potential strength in the struggle against fascism. It was urgent to change this – in other words, to change the policy.

But this could only be achieved when the great majority of the forces and parties of the People's Front were convinced that such a change was necessary. Only when that had

been done was it possible to raise the practical question of a change in Largo Caballero's war policy without doing irreparable harm to working-class unity, to the unity between Socialists and Communists, and the unity of the People's Front. But by that time, might not the undue prolongation of Largo Caballero's war policy have done irreparable harm to the prosecution of the war? Is there any doubt that if that policy had been changed six months sooner, not a few of the terrible reverses that the Republic suffered later might have been avoided?

The national and international situation in which Spain found herself in the period from 1936 to 1939 gave rise to the following contradiction: on the one hand the needs of the war demanded radical, speedy and drastic action to strengthen the army, suppress traitors, put the rearguard on a war footing, and so on; on the other hand, the need to preserve the unity of the People's Front obliged the Communists to act with patience in order to convince the other forces and reach agreement with them – which often involved lamentable delay and deficiencies.

But there was no other way. Had the Communist Party chosen to make use of the armed forces led by Communists in order to take power and establish a dictatorship – and it had sufficient men and military resources to do so – that would have shattered the People's Front, divided the army which was opposing fascist aggression, and hastened the downfall of the Republic. The Communist Party, fully conscious of its responsibility as the vanguard of the working class and Spanish democracy, never considered the possibility of embarking on a reckless path which would have led to suicide.

The crisis that broke in May 1937 with the resignation of the Largo Caballero government was resolved by the formation of a new People's Front government. Led by another Socialist, Dr. Juan Negrín, the new government had a political composition similar to that of the previous one, except that the CNT refused to take part in it.

The Negrín government inherited a serious situation from

Largo Caballero, the consequences of which were felt throughout the rest of the war.

Nevertheless, the first Negrín government took important steps to solve the basic problems of the war and the revolution. It speeded up the formation of the regular People's Army in the whole of the Republican zone and set up a unified command. In the economic sphere it established a state monopoly of foreign trade and control over foreign exchange. It cleared up some of the existing confusion in industry and began to build a war industry. In this respect, however, it moved in a hesitant manner, did not nationalise the basic industries and confined itself to state intervention which was only relatively effective.

The government also rectified many errors and excesses committed by the Anarchists in the rural areas. It put an end to the Council of Aragón, and dissolved the POUM and brought its leaders to trial. It established Republican law and order and put a stop the activities of the "uncontrolled elements".

Although Dr. Negrín displayed a certain inconsistency and lack of determination when it came to applying some of the essential measures urgently demanded in the interests of the war, the government over which he presided did improve the political situation in the Republican zone and upheld the democratic revolution. Notable progress was made in consolidating the democratic republic of a new type.

Loss of the North

At the time when the Negrín government was formed, on May 17, 1937, the military situation was disastrous in the north, where the fascist troops were advancing on Bilbao.

The Basque Country set, for the first time in history, the example of joint action by Communists and Catholics in the armed struggle against fascism. Fighting shoulder to shoulder, the units led by the Basque Communists and the Catholic units of the Nationalist Party – in whose ranks many priests

were to be found acting as chaplains – together shed their blood on the hills and valleys of their land, defending the Republic, democracy and the liberties of the Basque Country.

Unfortunately, the policy of the leadership of the Nationalist Party was not worthy of the efforts, the sacrifice and the heroism of the fighters. The Nationalist Party had complete control over the Basque government, and its overriding desire was to prevent the introduction in the Basque Country of the democratic changes what had already taken place in the rest of Republican territory. It refused to form the People's Army. The workers obtained neither social nor political benefits. The Basque government did nothing to gear the country's industrial potential to meet the needs of war, even when the continued existence of Basque freedom was at stake. At the same time, separatist and regionalist tendencies found lamentable expression.

Though that territory was so small, and cut off moreover from the bulk of the Republican zone, two would-be "sovereign" councils functioned there in addition to the Basque government – one in Santander and the other in Asturias – and there was insufficient co-ordination between them.

The central government under Largo Caballero had done nothing to remedy this situation, not even in connection with such an urgent task as that of forming one army and a unified military command for the whole of the north. In the military sphere the result of this was extremely serious, for it hindered the effective organisation of Republican resistance against the fascist offensive – conducted for the most part by Italian divisions with the help of vicious bombing by the Nazi air force, which destroyed Durango, Guernica and other towns.

It was too late for the Negrín government to rectify this. Shortly after its formation, the People's Army took the offensive to assist the north – in July 1937 at Brunete near Madrid, and some six weeks later at Belchite on the Aragón front. In both cases the people's forces, with prodigal valour, managed to break the enemy's lines. But the initial successes were not followed up.

And while the forces commanded by Lister, Modesto and other commanders, together with some of the units of the International Brigades, were winning important victories on the battle-fronts, incompetence flourished in the higher levels of the Republican command, to say nothing of the concealed treachery exemplified in elements of the type of the notorious Colonel Casado.

The supreme command in the war, vested throughout in the hands of Socialist politicians and professional soldiers who did not understand the democratic changes that had come about in Spain, at no time matched the revolutionary and popular character of the new army that had sprung from the very heart of the working class and peasantry.

The "High Command" had no confidence in the gigantic creative energy which had been unleashed in Spain by the struggle, and which was embodied in the thousands of commanders and commissars who had learned the art of war in the fire of battle and who, by their sacrifice and efforts, had forged the magnificent military unit that had been able to defeat the regular divisions of the Italian Army.

It was impossible to save the north, the whole of which fell into the hands of the enemy towards the end of September 1937.

Socialist-Communist Unity

This truly grievous loss for the Republic did not prevent the achievement of important gains, both in the political and military spheres, in the course of 1937. The basis for these gains was the growth of the Communist Party's influence and the further consolidation of unity among the working class and the people.

The war was a crucial test for men and parties alike. The policy of the Communist Party had found expression in epic actions such as those of Madrid and Guadalajara; it was incarnate in the best units of the People's Army; it was embodied in the Agrarian Reform, in the cultural progress

achieved in war conditions, in the defence of the peasants from the depredations of the Anarchists operating in the name of "libertarian communism".

The prestige of the Communists was extremely high among all sections of the population. When anyone referred to "the Party" – even if the speaker happened to be a Republican or a Socialist – he meant the Communist Party.

Thousands of the most politically conscious and revolutionary members of the Socialist Party, the CNT and other democratic bodies joined the ranks of the Communist Party, especially at the front – where to be a Communist meant to pledge one's word of honour to take the most dangerous post in every battle. In that part of Spain alone which remained in the hands of the Republic, the Party had over 300,000 members. The United Socialist Youth had over half a million.

For the Communists, the pivot of their drive for unity was their relationship with the Socialist Party. The removal of Largo Caballero brought about a considerable advance in Socialist-Communist unity of action.

On August 27, 1937, a programme of joint action was signed by the Spanish Socialist Party and the Communist Party of Spain. Its main points were as follows:

Strengthening of the fighting unity in the army;

Development of the war industry;

Formation of a National Economic Council to co-ordinate this war industry;

Recognition of the independent identity of Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia;

Reinforcement of the People's Front and of the alliance between workers and peasants;

A policy of good relations with the industrial and commercial petty-bourgeoisie;

Trade union unity and unity of the youth movements.

In the international sphere the programme provided for defence of the Soviet Union and a united struggle by the Spanish Socialist and Communist Parties for joint action by the Communist International, the Socialist International and

the International Federation of Trade Unions to thwart the criminal schemes of fascism.

This programme contributed to the development of joint action by the two parties, not only on the national level but on the provincial and local levels as well. The country was covered with a close network of co-ordinating committees.

United action by Communists and Socialists brought about favourable results at the front, in the rear, in the government and in other section of the working-class movement. It was a major contribution to the unity of the people.

The improvement in the relations between the two parties also had important international repercussions.

Hitherto the repeated proposals of the Communist International for joint action to be organised in support of the Spanish people and against the blockade to which the Republic was subjected had always met with a negative response from the Socialist International.

With the formation of the Negrín government and the growth of mass pressure, it became ever more difficult for this attitude to be maintained.

In June 1937, the President and Secretary of the Socialist International – Louis de Brouckère and Friedrich Adler – agreed to attend a meeting with representatives of the Communist International. The meeting was held in the French town of Annemasse. The Communist delegation consisted of Maurice Thorez, Marcel Cachin, Pedro Checa, Luigi Longo and Franz Dahlem.

At this meeting agreement was reached as follows:

- (1) It was noted that with regard to Spain both Internationals were putting forward analogous demands in a number of respects;
- (2) It was stated that efforts should be made to get joint action on behalf of the Spanish people wherever possible;
- (3) The resolution envisaged further consultations: "The delegates", it said, "have shown themselves in agreement in wanting new contacts to be made soon in order to

carry out a more detailed study of the specific ways which have been examined of giving moral and material help to Spain."

These points could have been the basis for action on a large scale. But the Socialist leaders refused to put them into effect. They were unwilling to do anything that might jeopardise the policy of imperialism. They sabotaged all serious help for the Spanish people and rejected unity of action with the Communists.

Progress and Difficulties

Inside Spain the cause of unity went forward. September 4, 1937 saw the formation of a National Youth Alliance, which embraced all the youth organisations in Republican territory – the United Socialist Youth, the youth sections of the various Republican parties and the FIJL (Iberian Federation of Libertarian Youth), which had Anarchist leanings. This alliance enhanced the role of the youth and their contribution to the war and also strengthened the cohesion and fighting spirit of the People's Army.

On October 1, 1937, at a meeting of the national committee of the UGT, the Caballero group, who had been openly veering towards an anti-unity and anti-communist stand, were removed from the leadership, which they had kept in their own hands up to that time. A new Executive Commission was elected in their place, headed by the Socialist González Peña and consisting largely of Socialist supporters of unity, and Communists.

Meanwhile, profound changes were taking place in the constituent bodies of the CNT. Many sincerely revolutionary workers who were members of the Confederation – and above all those at the front – were finding out in practice that the policy put forward by the Communist Party was correct. At the same time, the suppression of the putsch in May 1937 in Barcelona, and the dissolution of the pockets of Anarchist

dictatorship, especially in Aragón, had greatly weakened the power and influence of the FAI.

The role of guardian and mentor which the FAI had traditionally exercised in relation to the CNT, was virtually wiped out.

And while the FAI, which was in the hands of shady elements connected with the imperialist espionage services, continued its secret plots and conspiracies against the People's Front and the Republic, the majority of the CNT, led by men such as Mariano R. Vázquez, refused to take this road.

When the Negrín government was formed, the CNT and the supporters of Caballero in the leadership of the UGT had refused it their support, thinking that this would lead to its rapid downfall. But within a few months the situation changed. The new, unity-minded leadership of the UGT declared its full support for the People's Front government. And inside the CNT there was an increase in the prestige and influence of the more realistic and reasonable men and women who stood for collaboration with the government and the People's Front.

The progress towards unity that took place in 1937 was important. Nevertheless, that progress did not reach the degree of unity that the Spanish workers needed in a situation in which a life-and-death struggle was being waged against fascism. The Communist Party did its utmost to achieve two vital aims which could have brought about a profound change in the political situation of the Republic for the benefit of the anti-fascist cause. These aims were:

- (1) The formation of a united workers' party by the fusion of the Socialist and Communist Parties.
- (2) The organisation of a "consultation among the people" which would have enabled the legal structure of the Republic to be renewed in accordance with the political realities engendered by the anti-fascist war.

It must be said, with regard to the first of these aims, that even those Socialist leaders who stood for unity of action

with the Communists systematically refused to form a united workers' party, in spite of strong pressure from many Socialist workers and soldiers. In contrast, it must also be said, those same Socialist leaders appeared to feel no uneasiness at finding themselves in the same party with men like Besteiro, Araquistáin, Baraibar and others who were acting in open defiance of their official party leadership, against the government led by the Socialist Negrín, against the Republican resistance, against the People's Army and so on.

This shows that even those leaders of the Spanish Socialist Party who collaborated with the Communists in the government, in the People's Front and in the Joint Co-ordinating Committee of the Socialist and Communist Parties, did not take a consistent stand in favour of unity. They were not prepared to place themselves unreservedly in the service of the working class and the people; they wanted to leave the door open for their return, at a convenient time, to a policy of dividing the workers' ranks, a policy of complicity with the bourgeoisie.

As for the Communist Party's proposal for a democratic consultation of the people, it was rejected by the other organisations of the People's Front. This rejection showed that the representatives of the petty bourgeoisie and the middle bourgeoisie, and the reformist leaders too, feared that a consultation of the people might serve to consolidate the great democratic revolutionary gains won by the Spanish people in the course of the war. The proposed consultation would have demonstrated to the whole world the people's support for the Republican cause, and would have led to far broader and more intensive participation by the mass of the people in the life and leadership of the country. It would have meant a thorough-going renewal of Spanish democracy.

The consultation would have endowed the Republican state, and consequently the military high command, with the popular revolutionary impetus demanded by the very character of the war against fascism.

Victory at Teruel and Defeat in the Levante

Despite the weaknesses that have been pointed out, the People's Army grew stronger, both from the political and military viewpoints, throughout 1937. In December of that year, Franco was preparing a fresh offensive against Madrid. To counteract this operation – which was a very serious threat to the Republic – the People's Army launched an offensive on December 15 with the aim of capturing Teruel.

Across the snow-clad countryside, with between 25° and 35° (F) of frost, the Republican troops, many of whom had only rope-soled sandals, advanced with truly admirable stoicism and courage.

The enemy was forced to disperse the troops he had been concentrating in the Central Sector and send them to rescue Teruel, which was besieged by the People's Army.

In spite of this, the encircled fascist troops in Teruel were forced to capitulate after fierce fighting, and the city was liberated by the Republican Army during the first few days of 1938.

At about this time the German Ambassador in Salamanca, von Stohrer, sent a telegram to Hitler to say that Franco would be unable to continue the war without a great increase in foreign aid. And so, while the western powers tightened the noose of Non-Intervention with which the Spanish people were being strangled, Germany and Italy again increased their deliveries of war material and the despatch of entire military units to Franco. This enabled him to organise a big offensive against the Levante (the Mediterranean coast). On February 22 he recaptured Teruel. On March 9, thanks to his overwhelming superiority in aircraft, artillery and other equipment, he succeeded in making a break-through on the Eastern front and started to advance towards the Mediterranean.

The Battle of Teruel had plainly revealed the tenacity and courage of the Republican troops, and in particular the high fighting quality of the units sprung from the Fifth Regiment, which – as in previous engagements – had borne the brunt

of the struggle there. But in other units of the People's Army, and above all at the top levels, the evil effects of the policy being carried out by the Socialist Indalecio Prieto as Minister of Defence were making themselves felt.

Prieto was obsessed with the idea of draining the Republican army of the life-blood of renovation, destroying its character as a revolutionary people's army. He wanted to relegate those commanders who had emerged from the ranks of the people to a purely subordinate role, to suppress the institution of the Political Commissars, to eliminate Communists from positions of command and to give priority instead to those professional military men who had least in common with the sentiments of the people, including some who were on the Republican side rather because of a geographical accident than because of any anti-fascist convictions of their own. With such men as these, Prieto was hoping to form an "old-style", "non-political" army.

Prieto, through his lack of confidence in the people and the People's Army, was mainly to blame for the fact that the capture of Teruel was not used to give the enemy a decisive blow that might have changed the course of the war.

Moment of Greatest Danger

As soon as the fascists launched their general offensive in the East, Prieto's defeatist tendencies came to the surface. The Socialist leader declared that the war was lost, that defeat was only a matter of days. Unfortunately, this was not merely his own personal point of view.

Just as, during the periods when the military situation was improving, the unity of the People's Front grew stronger and defeatist tendencies were carefully hidden, so when the situation became difficult, the opposite happened. Corrupt and demoralised elements in the Republican camp – those who were influenced by international imperialism – got busy and tried to impose "solutions", the real aim of which was to undermine the resistance, break up the People's

Front, weaken the government and thus pave the way to defeat.

In the early spring of 1938, the situation of the Spanish Republic was extremely grave, for while Franco's troops were advancing towards the Mediterranean, threatening to split Republican territory into two separate zones, the correlation of forces in the international scene was developing in a direction distinctly favourable to fascism.

On March 13 Hitler entered Vienna. France and Britain shamefully capitulated. Furthermore, the British government was then negotiating an agreement with Italy (it was signed on April 16) whereby – the imminent defeat of the Republic being taken for granted – the intervention of Italian troops on Franco's side was "legalised" and their evacuation was envisaged as taking place only *after* Franco's victory.

In France, the Communist Party's proposals for the formation of a genuine Popular Front government, with Communist participation, were making no headway because of the vacillations of the Socialists. Blum formed a government without the Communists – a government so feeble that it lasted less than a month, giving way to the Daladier-Bonnet team which stood for a policy of complete submission to the dictates of the Foreign Office and of still greater concessions to the fascist aggressors.

Against this international background, Spain's defeatist elements carried on intense activity to bring the Republic to its knees.

At a meeting of the government on March 15, Defence Minister Prieto came out in favour of capitulation, declaring that the war was lost.

Government and press circles in Washington, London and Paris announced that the Republic would be finished in a fortnight. And the French Ambassador in Barcelona kindly invited the Republican authorities to flee from Spain on a French warship.

The People's Answer

The Political Bureau of the Spanish Communist Party, in agreement with the United Socialist Party of Catalonia and the United Socialist Youth, decided to call on the people, the masses, the armed forces, to save the Republic. The Communists persuaded the Socialist Party, the UGT and the CNT to join in organising a great demonstration, which marched through the streets of Barcelona on March 16 and went to the government headquarters, demanding that the resistance be continued and that those Ministers who had lost faith in the struggle be replaced.

Before the demonstration was over, the enemy started a series of vicious air raids on the Catalan capital.

But nothing could break the morale of the people, who once again affirmed their unshakeable determination to fight fascism.

From every front, military units sent letters and telegrams to the government, demanding that the struggle should go on and offering to perform fresh feats of heroism and self-sacrifice.

The United Socialist Youth issued a call for the enrolment of two divisions of young volunteers within ten days.

A great surge of patriotism swept through the whole of Republican territory, producing a degree of unity which had hitherto been impossible.

On March 13, a united action pact was signed between the CNT and the UGT. Its fundamental aims were to strengthen the army, organise the war industry, nationalise heavy industry and the banks, and ensure that the trade union movement, in all spheres, would make a greater contribution to the anti-fascist struggle.

On April 2, the UGT and the CNT officially entered the People's Front – a step which the Communist Party had been urging since the beginning of the war but which the CNT had until then obstinately opposed. On April 6, 1936, the Negrín government was reorganised – in a manner contrary to the wishes of the defeatists. Prieto left the Defence Ministry, which was taken over by Negrín.

The government was broadened by the inclusion of the Chairman of the UGT, González Peña, and a Minister from the CNT, Segundo Blanco. All the parties already in the government – the Republican Left, the Republican Union, the Catalan Left, the Basque Nationalist Party and the Socialist and Communist Parties – continued to be represented.

To facilitate the broadening of the government, the Communist Party accepted a reduction of its representation to one Ministry. The Party also did everything it could to keep Indalecio Prieto in the government, albeit in some post other than that of Minister of Defence.

But these efforts were unsuccessful. Prieto refused, and went to join those who were working for capitulation and spreading anti-communism and disunity in the Republican camp.

In this way a paradoxical situation came about. Officially the Socialist Party was supporting the resistance policy of the government, which was led by a Socialist, Dr. Negrín, and officially it was supporting unity. At the same time the principal leaders of Spanish Socialism, who at one time had been at loggerheads as the leaders of the three opposing factions in their party – Besteiro, Caballero and Prieto – now came together in a defeatist and splitting stand, intent on undermining the Republican resistance to fascism and anxious to overthrow the Negrín government. This had a big influence on the general attitude of the Socialist Party, diminishing its contribution to the struggle and swinging it further and further away from the path of unity which it had followed in 1937.

The reorganisation of the government made it possible to take urgent steps to meet the agonising situation in the eastern part of Spain. It was not possible to prevent the enemy from reaching Vinaroz, on the Mediterranean coast, on April 15 and cutting Republican territory in two. But the fascists' offensive in the direction of Valencia was held back and their advance towards the north was stopped, the front being stabilised on the line formed by the two rivers, Segre and Ebro.

National Unity

Although the political mobilisation of the people and the Army had inflicted a defeat on the advocates of capitulation, there was no denying that the situation of the Republic had very perceptibly changed for the worse, both in the military sphere and that of international affairs.

In such a situation, what was needed was to give the Republic a *broad*er political base, which would make it possible not only to achieve the complete mobilisation of the energy and resources available in Republican territory but also to divide the enemy bloc by seeking an understanding with the patriotic forces in the Franco zone with a view to a future peace which would safeguard the fundamental interests of Spain and her people.

"If any change in the Party's tactics were to be envisaged", wrote José Díaz in a letter to *Mundo Obrero* on March 30, 1938, "this should consist, not of measures narrowing the basis of the people's unity, but of steps to make it still broader".

This was the aim of the policy of national unity, which was first formulated at that time by the Spanish Communist Party, and which has continued to inspire its ceaseless struggle against Franco's tyranny.

On April 20, 1938, the government announced its programme, the "Thirteen Points" which defined the main objectives of the people's struggle. They were as follows:

1. The absolute independence and integrity of Spain.
2. The liberation of Spanish territory from foreign occupation and foreign influence.
3. A people's republic.
4. The organisation when the war ended of a plebiscite on the form of government.
5. Respect for the national liberties of the peoples of Spain, compatible with Spanish unity.
6. Full social and civic rights for every Spaniard, including freedom of religious worship and conscience.
7. Protection of private property and the elements of pro-

duction, but also the prevention of such accumulations of wealth as might result in the exploitation of citizens.

8. Complete Agrarian Reform.
9. Social legislation guaranteeing workers' rights.
10. The cultural, physical and moral improvement of the nation.
11. A non-political Army as an instrument for the defence of the people.
12. Renunciation of war as an instrument of national policy, and fidelity to the League of Nations.
13. Amnesty for all Spaniards who proved they desired to co-operate in the work of reconstruction (the amnesty to include common soldiers of the rebel army).

The Thirteen Points were a peace offer. They put forward a way to end the war without reprisals. But they were in no way an offer of surrender – they were, in fact, the very opposite of that.

The Communist Party pledged its full support for the Thirteen Points. At a meeting of the Central Committee held in Madrid in May 1938, Dolores Ibárruri outlined a clear prospect of struggle for national unity of the Spaniards.

"It is the Spaniards alone", she said, "who can settle Spain's disputes, and they alone have the right to do so."

Defining the Communist Party's policy of unity, she added:

"The unity we need today is a broader, firmer and more effective and efficacious unity than that which has existed till now. It must be national unity... it must enable us to mobilise, organise and draw into fight against the invaders, our people – those living in our own zone who belong to no party, and those living in the occupied zone who have forcibly or through deception come under the influence of the fascist organisations."

In supporting the Thirteen Points, the Communist Party underlined the democratic character of the revolution.

At the meeting of the Central Committee in May 1938, it took important steps in working out the economic problems of the democratic revolution in relation to the specific

conditions existing in Spain. In order to destroy the material roots of fascism, the Communist Party advocated, in addition to the agrarian reform, the nationalisation of the banks, transport and the big industrial enterprises. At the same time the Communists pressed for the return to their owners of many small and medium-sized industrial and commercial concerns that had been illegally "collectivised" by the Anarchists. The Communist Party insisted that the petty bourgeoisie should be an ally of the working class, and declared that a sector of industry in the hands of small-scale and medium-scale businessmen and industrialists was necessary alongside nationalised large-scale industry.

The policy of national unity was appropriate, too, in relation to the situation that was developing in the Franco zone, where warweariness was growing and political contradictions were being manifested in a more or less open way.

Franco had brought together the bloc of reactionaries who supported his rebellion in one "united" party based on the merging of the Falange and the Traditionalists.

In order to create this one "united" party, Franco had brutally eliminated a group of old Falangist leaders and had himself taken over the leadership of the party, delegating the organisational work to his brother-in-law, Serrano Suñer.

The Monarchists, of whom there were two groups, each expecting the speedy restoration of its respective pretender, were becoming restive at Franco's evasions.

In addition, the overbearing presence of the Germans and Italians was causing discontent among wide circles both in the civilian population and the army.

Towards the end of April 1938, Franco found it necessary to dismiss one of his generals for a speech in which the latter had praised the merits of the "Red" soldiers.

In the course of June and July of the same year, the German Ambassador to Franco sent information to his government couched in the following terms: "Voices are being raised in favour of ending the war... Even in the higher ranks of the Army strong objections have been raised to the

continuation of the war, which is dragging on and causing Spain losses in lives and property, and the hope has been expressed that a formula can be found to bring hostilities to an end."

The Epic of the Ebro

However, the decisive factor which could impose a solution to the war, based on the Thirteen Points, was for the Republic to restore the military situation, to demonstrate its ability to fight. The Communist Party devoted its best forces to this end, in collaboration with the most resolute men and women belonging to other parties.

Yet all the time it was becoming increasingly difficult, despite the existence of pacts and co-ordinating committees, to maintain and strengthen the unity of the anti-fascist forces. When it was a question of taking action, many persons forgot all about the pacts.

Demoralisation, and the trends towards defeatism and anti-communism, continued to develop – with encouragement from the very summit of the Republic. They were spreading through the state apparatus and sections of the army, nourished above all by the attitude of the governments in London, Washington and Paris, which, following Hitler's conquest of Austria, were intensifying their policy of capitulation in face of the fascist aggressors.

In this atmosphere, the news put out by the press agencies on the morning of July 25, 1938, that the Republican army had gone over to the offensive, crossed the Ebro and broken through the enemy's lines, aroused the world like a thunderclap.

In the capitalist countries – in spite of the stubborn efforts of the Communist Parties – the spirit of capitulation to fascism was extending its sway. And it was then, once again, that the Spanish people showed by the living example of the Ebro offensive that it was possible and necessary to fight against the hated enemy.

The great leader of the Communist International, Georgi Dimitrov, was right when he wrote at this time:

"It must be plainly stated that during these two years the Spanish people have done more to defend the cause of world peace and progress than all that has been done up to now by the working people in the capitalist countries in support of the Spanish people."

In the Battle of the Ebro the same units of the People's Army which had already played the main role in previous engagements – in the battles of Guadalajara, Brunete, Belchite and Teruel – once again covered themselves with glory. The Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Ebro was Juan Modesto. And Enrique Lister commanded the Fifth Corps, which played a fundamental part in the battle.

With magnificent audacity and a noble spirit of self-sacrifice, the troops hurled themselves into the perilous task of crossing a big river, lined with enemy trenches, and then went on to advance through territory that was being very heavily bombed and shelled.

The heroism of the troops was matched by the skill with which their commanders – the great majority of whom were men of the people – directed this extremely complex military operation.

Against the Army of the Ebro, which constituted less than one-tenth of the whole Republican fighting force, Franco concentrated his best troops, the bulk of his artillery, and all his tanks and aircraft. One thousand three hundred German and Italian planes took part in the battle. The enemy's superiority in war material was in the proportion of 12 to 1 as regards heavy artillery, 15 to 1 in bomber planes, and 10 to 1 in fighter aircraft.

The fact that the Ebro offensive was possible was not merely due to the progress made in mastering military science, but even more to the success achieved by the officers and commissars of the Army of the Ebro in welding together all the fighters – belonging though they did to different parties

and organisations – in an unshakeable unity, an iron determination in the struggle against fascism.

This unity was the incarnation of the Communist Party's policy. If its like had existed in the rest of the army, the army's role would have been a hundred times more effective.

The Ebro offensive caused dismay, and in some instances panic, in the enemy ranks. At the fascist Supreme Headquarters violent scenes took place between Franco and some of his generals. The morale of many of them was considerably undermined. War-weariness had increased substantially both among the civilian population and at the front.

Once again the problem had to be faced: purely within the Spanish framework, Franco could not win. He needed a further massive dose of foreign intervention.

7

The final stage

The Munich Conspiracy

On September 29, 1938, in the city of Munich, there took place the notorious and shameful capitulation of the French and British governments to Hitler and Mussolini.

Czechoslovakia was sacrificed and handed over to the German fascist dictator.

The Munich surrender was a heavy blow to the cause of anti-fascist resistance, to the cause of fighting Spain, to the cause of world peace.

In an attempt to justify such craven submission to the fascist aggressors, the French and British Prime Ministers argued that, in acting as they did, they had removed the danger of a world conflagration. In actual fact, they had brought it nearer and made it inevitable.

If the French and British governments had taken a firm stand against Hitler's expansionist aims, as the government of the Soviet Union repeatedly proposed, subsequent events would have been very different. It is more than likely that Hitler, faced by a solid front composed of states determined to bar his way, would have beaten a retreat.

Within the framework of a firm policy of collective security and resistance, the Spanish people's struggle against fascism would have made a most valuable contribution to the common cause of peace. The favourable course on which it had

embarked with the victorious Ebro offensive would have been guaranteed.

With the victory of the policy of capitulation to fascism, however, the stubborn resistance of the Spanish Republic in face of the combined onslaught of Spanish, Portuguese, German and Italian fascism became a vexatious affair which was in contradiction with the whole course of "appeasing" concessions made to the aggressors.

The heads of the Foreign Office and the Quai d'Orsay, confident that by favouring Franco's victory they would be able to retain their positions in the Iberian peninsula, were impatient for Republican resistance to be brought to an end.

The fascist powers, encouraged by the spirit of appeasement with which the so-called democratic governments were imbued, decided to precipitate the defeat of Republican Spain.

The Final Battle

To bring about this defeat, it was necessary to redouble military intervention.

Hitler and Mussolini were very well aware of this. In a typical message sent to his government two days after the Munich surrender the German Ambassador said:

"According to German and Italian circles... it cannot be expected that Franco will win the war by force of arms in the comparatively near future unless Germany and Italy are prepared once again to make big sacrifices in Spain, both in war material and in men."

As if to confirm this estimate, Franco approached the German and Italian dictators three weeks later with a new and very substantial demand for troops and military supplies.

Hitler and Mussolini agreed to help their *condottiere*, making good use of the opportunity to impose fresh demands on him. In November the Nazi government hinted to Franco that the deliveries of war material that he had requested depended on his giving up his reservations regarding the

mining concessions included in the "Montana Plan" (Documents on German Foreign Policy, Series D, Vol III, 469-472).

Eight days later, Franco's minister Jordana, informed the German ambassador that Franco accepted all the conditions laid down, simply asking that, in return, the Fuehrer's government should keep those conditions secret - so humiliating were they to the dignity of Spain.

Catalonia was selected as the theatre of operations for the general offensive that was being planned against the Republic. It was there that the fascists had the possibility of displaying an overwhelming superiority of forces.

On November 15, 1938, after four months of incessant fighting and with not the slightest help from the various military headquarters in the central-southern zone, the Army of the Ebro was forced to withdraw to the starting-point of its offensive. The group of armies in Catalonia, which had to take the shock of the fascist attack, was very much below strength as a result of the constant fighting. The Army of the Ebro had lost over half its effectives. The fascist offensive was to compel these forces to fight without a pause in a life-and-death struggle, without hope of relief or of new armaments, without even the prospect that the terrible gaps left in their ranks could be filled up with fresh troops.

Throughout November and December 1938, convoys of German and Italian ships constantly arrived at the ports in Franco's zone, bringing thousands of troops and military technicians and hundreds of thousands of tons of war material.

On December 23 the fascists launched their offensive, throwing everything they had into the attack against the Republican lines.

The spearhead of the so-called Nationalist troops was an Italian army commanded by General Gambara; it was composed of the Littorio, 23rd of March, Black Arrow, Green Arrow and Blue Arrow motorised divisions together with a new Italian unit called the Ninth of May. Franco's best division, composed of Navarrese troops, was reinforced by

two Italian brigades; there was also an armoured group commanded by the Italian Colonel Olmi, and other equally "national" units. The fascist General Ambrosio Bariatti was not far wrong when he wrote in *Il Mediterraneo* a few days after the attack had begun: "It is time to realise that the war in Spain is a continuation of the war in Abyssinia."

The numerical superiority of the attacking forces was overwhelming. According to the figure given by the historian Ramos Oliviera, the fascists concentrated 340,000 men on the Catalan front. The two Republican armies defending Catalonia numbered 120,000 men, of whom only 37,000 had rifles.

The former Republican Minister Alvarez del Vayo wrote in his book *Freedom's Battle*: "The proportion of loyal and rebel arms during the various phases of the offensive was as follows: Aviation - between 1 to 10 and 1 to 20; heavy artillery - abundance of material in rebel territory and none whatsoever on the loyalist side; artillery of medium and light calibre - between 1 to 20 and 1 to 30; tanks and small tanks - 1 to 30; light infantry arms, including automatics - 1 to 10."

In Catalonia a tremendous, unequal fight began, in which the Republican infantry was confronted with a mass of aeroplanes, artillery and tanks, which cut them to pieces with all the fury of tremendous firepower. Hanging on to their native soil, as it were by their nails and teeth, the people's soldiers made the enemy pay a heavy price in blood for every inch of ground. Every withdrawal was followed by a counter-attack. After two weeks of incessant fighting in which they suffered terrible losses, the loyal troops had lost ground, but they were continuing to fight with desperate heroism.

But Republican heroism was confronted with fascist tanks and aircraft. By the third week of the battle, the Republican troops had already been decimated. Divisions, brigades and battalions had now become purely symbolic concepts, consisting in reality of a handful of mortally weary men.

Its initial resistance shattered, the front broken, the Republican army slowly began a vast withdrawal.

The Sealed Frontier

Inside and outside Spain, those who were striving to break the Republican resistance co-operated with the fascist offensive by cutting Catalonia off from all possible aid.

In the first place they prevented those who were fighting in Catalonia from receiving the arms that had been sold by the Soviet government to the Spanish government in the most difficult period of the spring of 1938, when French and British diplomacy were already weaving a shroud for the Spanish Republic.

In his book *Freedom's Battle* the former Foreign Minister in the Negrín government, Alvarez del Vayo, has revealed that these supplies would have provided the loyalist navy with two dozen ultra-rapid torpedo-boats. "The number of aeroplanes, all manned by Spanish crews", he added, "would be increased to 500 or 600, a figure hitherto undreamed of during the war."

Furthermore, Negrín himself stated at the end of the fighting in Catalonia that there were, in addition to the planes, 500 pieces of artillery and 10,000 machine guns still held up in France.

With only a part of these supplies, purchased by the Republic from the friendly government of the U. S. S. R., it would have been possible to equip the People's Army as it had never been equipped from the start of the war, and to have changed the whole course of the battle for Catalonia and of the war as a whole.

But the Soviet Union's solidarity, and the incalculable sacrifices made by the Spanish people and the Republican government, were of no avail. On June 12, 1938, the French government decided to close the frontier with Spain, thereby placing a thousand obstacles and delays in the way of the arrival of the arms.

If the frontier had not been closed, the Republican armed forces in Catalonia could have had at their disposal in September enough military supplies to meet any contingency. The unilateral action of the French government was a death-blow

— as history has shown — to the Spanish people's struggle. It was one of the cruellest mockeries perpetrated by the policy of "Non-Intervention".

The French Communist Party raised its voice against this unjust, discriminatory attitude. In the Chamber of Deputies the group of Communist M.P's tabled a motion calling for the opening of the frontier with Spain. But the majority — including the Socialists — voted against it.

And when at last, perhaps realising the tragic error it had committed, the French government decided to let a very small quantity of those arms go through, it was too late. The bulk of the arms which did arrive in Spain fell into fascist hands before it was even unpacked.

Inaction in the Central-Southern Zone

More grievous still was the lack of support for those fighting in Catalonia on the part of the military command of the central-southern zone.

It was an unheard-of situation. The army group in Catalonia, and especially the Army of the Ebro, was forced to continue fighting, practically without a break, for over six months, from July 1938 to February 1939, withstanding the assault of the entire fascist war machine that had been concentrated against it. And all this while, in the central-southern zone, four armies with a total of 700,000 men stood by and saw how in Catalonia the enemy was tearing their comrades-in-arms to pieces.

From July 25, 1938, when the glorious Army of the Ebro crossed the river, until the time, four months later, when it was obliged to withdraw again to the left bank, not a single military operation was seriously undertaken in the central-southern zone.

Some time later a big combined offensive was planned for the fronts of Estremadura and Andalusia, together with another operation at Brunete, near Madrid. But the way in which both these operations were prepared and carried out

was so disastrous that they seemed to fit rather with some secret scheme for demoralising the Republican forces than with any desire to help Catalonia.

Because of scandalous sabotage by certain military headquarters in the central zone, the first of those operations, which was meant to begin on December 18 so as to disrupt the enemy's preparations for his attack on Catalonia, was delayed until January 5. Even so, it was suspended on the first day, in spite of having attained extraordinary initial successes.

Even more fantastic was the outcome of the operation started on January 15 in the Brunete sector. At 8 o'clock on that cold, rainy morning, the Republican soldiers went into the attack against the enemy positions. When the operation was called off at 5 p. m., they had not even been able to breach the enemy's barbed-wire defences. Deadly fire from the fascists, who had been aware of every last detail of the plan of attack, had mown down the Republican ranks. Nine hundred of the people's soldiers paid for this monstrous treachery with their lives. What Casado seems to have planned was not an operation to break through the enemy's positions but a mass slaughter of Republican soldiers.

The tragic outcome of these two operations revealed the treachery that was lurking in both Casado's and Miaja's headquarters. Those bloody defeats were required in order to create everywhere an atmosphere of helplessness and despair.

The Fall of Catalonia

Though these acts of desertion in Spain and abroad were equivalent to a death sentence for the armies battling in Catalonia, the defence of that zone could have been prolonged considerably if the authorities and the leaders of the majority of parties and Catalan organisations had possessed the will to resist which the situation demanded.

But the Catalan *Generalitat*, the local authorities and the

People's Front of Catalonia remained inactive. The dominant positions in the leadership of the Catalan parties, except for the United Socialist Party of Catalonia, were held by persons who were in favour of giving in, and none of them took a single step to face up courageously to the most urgent task – that of mobilising all the available resources and willpower for the struggle ahead.

The demoralising influence of the defeatists had had its effect on big sections of a population which had suffered cruelly from the rigours and privations of the war.

The enemy was drawing nearer to Barcelona, but the Drum of the Bruch* was silent. Its resounding call to battle was not heard in that sad and muted atmosphere.

On January 26, the enemy occupied Barcelona. Neither the Ministry of Defence nor the Staff Headquarters had made any serious effort to defend the city, not even to the extent of throwing up a few primitive fortifications.

This did not prevent Mussolini from announcing the next day at the Piazza di Venezia in Rome, that the capture of Barcelona had been a brilliant Italian victory. Nor did it stop his fascist gangs from holding demonstrations all over Italy on the same day, clamouring: "On to Paris! On to Corsica!"

The fall of Barcelona was the prelude to the loss of the whole of Catalonia. Slowly, so as to give time for the evacuation of the civilian population, the Republican Army continued to fall back. Here and there it formed sporadic centres of resistance, blew up bridges or counter-attacked to hold up the enemy's advance. But over and over again it had to give ground in face of the enemy's overwhelming superiority in fire-power.

The longed-for arms still failed to arrive. The new recruits

* During the Napoleonic Wars, a patriotic village lad from the neighbourhood of Montserrat stood for a long time at the entrance to a cave, beating his drum. The sound of this one drum, echoing from the cave, gave the impression that a large body of troops was in the vicinity, and in this way he held up the advance of the French army.

who had been called up were sent to the front without either training or weapons. Due to the sabotage carried out by the military headquarters in the central and southern zones, the enemy was able to concentrate all his energies on the Catalan front without a glance over his shoulder. Resistance was impossible.

On February 1, the Republican Cortes met for the last time on Spanish soil. This historic meeting was held in the ancient castle of Figueras, not far from the French frontier. There, a brief set of peace proposals was drawn up and announced. It could be summed up in three points:

1. Evacuation of all foreign elements from Spanish territory.
2. The Spanish people to be allowed freely to decide their own political system, without foreign pressure of any kind.
3. No reprisals to be taken.

Here was a clear reply to those outside and inside Spain who were endeavouring to end the people's resistance by outright capitulation to fascism.

The Three Points of Figueras sought, above all, to establish a basis for reconciliation among Spaniards and to bring the civil war to an end by eliminating all foreign interference in Spanish life and avoiding reprisals – without victors or vanquished.

Nevertheless, eight days after the Republican Cortes had announced this programme of peace and concord, Franco promulgated his "Law of Political Responsibility" – one of the most loathsome and monstrous examples of the dictator's punitive "justice", in which simple omission was represented as a crime (since it was designed to punish those who "by act or omission" had hindered the victory of the fascist rebellion) and which introduced *retrospective* criminal responsibility, proclaiming it a crime to have belonged to democratic organisations or parties from 1934 onwards – in other words, at a time when membership of such parties and organisations was perfectly legal.

The promulgation of this fascist law showed that whereas the Republic was doing its utmost to ensure a period of concord and civic peace after the war, Franco was whetting his knife in order to follow up the fratricidal struggle he had started with a new onslaught of murderous fury, revenge and hatred.

Meanwhile, the retreat continued. Wending their way painfully along the roads leading to the French frontier moved a vast stream of people – soldiers mingling with civilians, government lorries with peasant carts, the wounded with women and children.

Two hundred thousand people made up that tragic procession of civilian refugees who had taken the agonising decision to leave their hearths and homes rather than live under fascism. It was a moving, dramatic plebiscite in favour of anti-fascism and the Republic.

On February 10, the Republican troops, with tears in their eyes, crossed the frontier. France stood aghast at the tragic spectacle. Few, at that moment, could have foreseen that only a short time later the French people would experience the same searing trials of war and mass exodus, the trampling of fascist jackboots over their motherland.

For the time being, what awaited the Spanish anti-fascists were the barbed-wire camps of Saint-Cyprien and Argelès, hunger, cold and the bitterness of finding themselves – after having paid such a high price in sacrifices and blood for the democratic cause – treated as common criminals by a government that called itself democratic, a bitterness that was alleviated only by the tokens of human solidarity which reached them from the peoples of France, Britain and other countries.

The Capitulators Continue Their Work

With the loss of Catalonia the situation of the Spanish Republic and conditions for continuing the resistance took a sharp turn for the worse.

It was not just the loss of a great military stronghold; with it there had been lost important centres of war industry, fertile agricultural areas and busy manufacturing towns, the frontier with France and the great port of Barcelona.

And on top of that there was the loss of two armies, with their commanders, their soldiers and their weapons of war. One of these was the Army of the Ebro, with its glorious Fifth Corps and the well-nigh legendary 11th Division – the bravest and most experienced units of the People's Army, which had withstood the fire of the bloodiest battles of the civil war. Now they were in France, interned in concentration camps and out of the fight.

The effect of all this on the central and southern zone was very grievous.

Defeatist trends were intensified, sucking into their muddy wake many people who, by reason of their origin or their ideas, were not prepared to face up to the suffering demanded by the continuation of the war and who lacked all faith in the boundless capacity for sacrifice existing in a people which is aware that its most vital interests, its life, dignity and freedom, are at stake.

Among the leading personalities most representative of the spirit of capitulation was Manuel Azaña, President of the Republic. As soon as Catalonia was lost he had taken up residence in France with the sole idea of bringing the war to an end by any means whatsoever.

Prominent among them, too, was Julián Besteiro, professor of philosophy and Socialist leader, who since 1933 had been isolated within his own party on account of his hopelessly reformist views. From the beginning of the war he had regarded it as madness to stand up to fascism, and had counselled surrender. On November 15, 1938, he had propounded his ideas to the Socialist Party Executive; according to him, without the participation of the Communists, the war would be lost; with their participation it might be won, but in that case the Communists would gain greater support and prestige. Faced with this alternative, the Socialist leader preferred surrender to fascism. That was the political reasoning which constitut-

ed the essence of "Besteiro-ism" in the Spanish Socialist Party.

Defeatism was also rife in the army and navy headquarters. The most obstinate opponent of further resistance was Colonel Segismundo Casado, who was in command of the Central Army. His frequent interviews and under-cover meetings with leading advocates of capitulation in the Anarchist and Socialist ranks were notorious, as were his close contacts with the British Consul in Madrid and members of the British secret service.

Finally, from the murky pool of defeatism emerged some of the leaders of Spanish Anarchism. Abad de Santillán, one of the chiefs of the FAI, subsequently admitted that from 1937 on he had been secretly convinced that nothing would serve Anarchism better than the speediest possible end to all resistance.

In Madrid the FAI actively supported Colonel Casado. At a meeting of the co-ordinating committee of the FAI and the CNT, held on February 11, 1939, a resolution was passed praising Casado as "the leader most deserving of confidence."

About the beginning of the third week in February, an assembly of Anarchists was held, at which it was decided to set up a so-called Regional Defence Committee. Four days after it had been formed, this committee undertook to organise a *coup d'état* with the agreement of Casado. Naturally, this *coup*, aimed at ending the resistance of the people, had already been in preparation for a considerable time, with British imperialism as its main organiser.

It was logical that those who took the path of capitulation should find themselves travelling the same road as British imperialism, which continued to be the most consistent advocate of the policy of surrender to fascism. After having given way to Hitler at Munich, Chamberlain had proceeded to give way to Mussolini at the celebrated interview in Rome. The elderly British Premier returned from Italy with the fixed idea of hastening the death of the Spanish Republic. "The further prosecution of the war in Spain", he stated, "will only create dangerous situation."

And British imperialism redoubled its activity during the last months of the war, making use of diplomacy, its intelligence service, and other contacts.

Through each of these channels British imperialism was moving its pawns inside Republican Spain, co-ordinating the work of the defeatists in their various spheres of activity – in the army, the navy, the state machine, the political parties, the trade unions. Azaña, Besteiro, Casado, Buiza and the rest were the marionettes in a wretched, cowardly puppet-show, with the strings being pulled by Neville Chamberlain, Lord Halifax and their friends.

Resistance Was Possible

The defeatists exerted themselves afresh. They declared that the war was lost, that resistance was impossible and that if it went on the result would only be to prolong the people's sufferings.

The Spanish Communist Party made a great effort to counter this demoralising propaganda. In face of the defeatists' cries of despair it maintained that resistance was not only possible but was the only way to reach an honourable and humane peace between Spaniards.

Did the possibility of resistance really exist in the central-southern zone?

The Spanish Communist Party declared that it did.

The Republic possessed, in the central-southern zone, a large territory of ten provinces with a total area of 54,600 square miles and a population of over nine million inhabitants – that is to say, an area and a population larger than those of many European countries.

Within this zone was Madrid, the unconquered capital, and ports such as Valencia, Alicante, Almería and Cartagena, the last-named being Spain's most important naval base.

In the military sphere it had an army of 700,000 men, and a navy consisting of three cruisers, 13 destroyers, seven submarines, five torpedo-boats and two gunboats.

With all this, the Republic could have continued to hold out for many months.

But the question presented itself: "Resist? Yes, but what for? Simply in order to postpone the moment of inevitable defeat?"

It was not a question of postponing defeat, but of preventing it by finding a favourable way forward for the Spanish people's cause.

This was a realistic prospect. The Communist Party, in outlining its attitude on this crucial question, stated in a Manifesto issued on February 23, 1939:

"The International situation has never been more unstable than it is today. Resistance is not only necessary but possible. We maintain that our resistance - as has happened on other occasions when many people thought all was lost (November 1936, March and April 1938) - can once again change the situation, allow new factors to develop in our favour both in Spain and in the international sphere, and thus open up the prospect of victory."

The factors whose development was already envisaged by the Party were these: Following the Munich meeting, world opinion was beginning to react strongly against the policy of Non-Intervention. The increasingly insolent behaviour of the fascist dictators of Germany and Italy was alarming the mass of the people. Confronted by the overwhelming logic of events and, above all, by the pressure of the peoples, certain influential circles in the political life of Britain, the United States and France had begun to revise their attitude to the Spanish question and Non-Intervention.

On January 6, 1939, President Roosevelt had stated in a message to the United States Congress:

"We are convinced that our Law of Neutrality is likely to aid the aggressor and prevent aid from reaching the victims of aggression"

In Britain, during the last days of the war in Spain, Winston Churchill's name appeared among those of Members of

Parliament who were friendly to the Spanish Republic. Anthony Eden wrote at that time:

"Franco is conquering Catalonia thanks to a military power unprecedented in this war and, in particular, thanks to his air superiority. Where did this military power come from? The whole world knows who supplied and is still supplying these arms, in open violation of agreements and treaties."

In France, the imminent threat of the appearance of a third fascist frontier (that of Franco) alarmed a number of political and military personalities during the time when the battle for Catalonia was raging. And they had good reason to be alarmed. The fascist press in Italy was already cynically proclaiming what the Spanish democrats had been shouting till they were hoarse.

"As is well known", said *Lavoro Fascista*, "Non-Intervention' was simply a farce... Mussolini and Italy are triumphing. The present situation in the Mediterranean is not what it was yesterday. The Pyrenean frontier, which Louis XIV abolished in 1700, has been restored. Once again, France has three frontiers."

In England, as in France, according to Alvarez del Vayo, "everybody suddenly realised the tremendous mistake which had been made in allowing Germany and Italy to convert Spain into one of their zones of influence, and the repercussions that their Spanish victory would have on the whole of European politics, especially in the Mediterranean."

It is true that these were still isolated symptoms, against which must be set the official policy of "appeasing the aggressor" that Britain, France and the United States were still continuing to pursue. Nevertheless, they revealed that something was changing in international politics and that this change was inevitable.

And if the international situation was changing, if the contradictions between the Rome-Berlin Axis and the western countries were becoming sharper and if in those countries the supporters of a firmer policy towards Nazi aggression were winning the day, then the Spanish Republic could find support where until then it had only encountered enmity.

And the swashbuckler Franco, kept on his feet and sustained by foreign fascist weapons, might find himself compelled to give up his intransigent attitude of "unconditional surrender" and "peace at the point of the sword", especially since in his own rearguard the symptoms of disintegration and war-weariness were becoming acute. Franco would not have been able to prolong the war much further without running the risk of uprisings occurring behind his own lines.

These were the considerations on which the policy of resistance, upheld by the Communists, was based. Resistance – to avoid the heavy price in blood that would have to be paid in the event of defeat or unconditional surrender. Resistance – to win the right to a peace without reprisals or humiliation.

In order to resist, however, it was essential that the government should take energetic action, both outside and inside Spain; in the international sphere, to call a halt to the course of capitulation being pursued by the so-called democratic governments; inside Spain, to undo the work of the defeatists.

This action was not undertaken. The inertia and indecision shown by the Premier, Dr. Negrín, at that time – which should have been the time of supreme decision – were disastrous for the people's cause.

The Prime Minister deliberately allowed the ship of state to drift. Behind an inflexible mask of resistance, Negrín concealed a mood of profound demoralisation. This was later revealed by his close associate and fellow-Socialist Julian Zugazagoitia, who wrote, describing Negrín's state of mind a few days before the fall of Catalonia:

"We heard him say, dejectedly, speaking more to himself than to us: 'We shall see how we finish off the next stage! That part will be more difficult!'... We were left in no doubt. We were engaged in finishing it off, and Negrín, in contemplating his move to the central-southern zone, had no other intention but to bring to an end, with the least possible damage, a lost war."

This state of mind explains many things.

Firstly, it explains why, when the situation in Catalonia was hopeless, no steps were taken to transfer war material and some of the best fighting units to the central-southern zone, although the Republican fleet was lying idle at Cartagena.

Secondly, it explains why nothing was done to stop the rot of defeatism, especially in the armed forces, in spite of the fact that the defeatist ideas of certain army and navy commanders were common knowledge.

And thirdly, it explains why, in addition to leaving defeatists such as Casado, Miaja, Buiza and others in their positions of command, martial law was declared, by virtue of which these same commanders acquired the powers they needed in order to behead the people's resistance.

These weaknesses on the part of Negrín made it possible for the forces of capitulation to deal the Republic a series of blows which prevented it from recovering after the loss of Catalonia and which struck it down at the feet of fascism.

One of these blows was dealt by British imperialism on the very day the Republican troops left Catalonia. Turning straight from Non-Intervention to the most shameless intervention, the Chamberlain government despatched the cruiser "Devonshire" to Minorca to demand the surrender of that Republican island to Franco.

This was an unspeakable act of hostility towards a government – the Republican government – with which Britain still had normal diplomatic relations.

The next blow was the severing of diplomatic relations with the Republican government by the French and British governments, and their recognition of Franco's rebel government on February 27, 1939.

On the following day, Azaña resigned from his post as President of the Republic. The close connection between these two events was obvious. They were two stages in an operation intended to place the Negrín government *hors de combat*. So that nobody should remain in any doubt, Chamberlain hastened to declare in the House of Commons that thenceforward the Negrín government had no legal standing.

He thus furnished the capitulators with a "judicial" pretext with which to justify their intended *coup d'etat*.

This, in effect, was the signal to the capitulators inside Spain to launch a combined attack against the resistance.

On the day the French and British governments recognised Franco, Colonel Casado banned the Communist newspaper *Mundo Obrero*.

On the following day he ordered the arrest of Communists who were distributing a party document in Madrid.

While he did nothing to restrain the Fifth Column, which was operating with ever-increasing impunity, Casado used the powers which the declaration of martial law had placed in his hands in order to stifle the voice of the Communists, the most incorruptible force in the entire resistance.

Casado and his accomplices knew very well that the disruption of unity was the shortest road to defeat. That was why their efforts were concentrated on isolating the Communist Party from the rest of the People's Front, with the aim of destroying the unity of the working class and of the people as a whole.

The Communist Party was grossly slandered, and accused of preparing for the forcible "seizure of power".

This accusation was very significant. The Casado plotters of 1939 were repeating almost word for word the lying allegations made by the fascist plotters of 1936 to justify their uprising against the legal Republican government.

The Capitulators' Revolt

At the beginning of March, events began to move very rapidly.

On March 4, an insurrection broke out at Cartagena. Franco's secret supporters in the town took advantage of the internal conflict in the Republican camp to come out into the open and seize the greater part of the naval base. They used the *Los Dolores* radio station to broadcast an urgent appeal to Franco for reinforcements.

On the following day, loyal troops defeated the combined attack of the capitulators and the fascists. The *Castillo de Olite*, a troopship sent by Franco, was sunk with 2,300 men on board.

But something irreparable had already happened. The Republican Fleet had sailed for North Africa. The cause of Republican resistance had received a death-blow with this act of treachery and cowardice.

Simultaneously the *coup d'etat* was carried out in Madrid. Just after midnight on Sunday March 5, 1939, the radio announced the formation of a self-styled "National Junta of Defence". Casado, Besteiro and the Anarchist Mera, the ostensible heads of this Junta of capitulation, delivered their hypocritical speeches. To conceal their criminal intent, they were obliged to speak in terms of a "Numantian resistance", to declare: "Either we shall all be saved or we shall all go down together", and to talk about "peace with honour". Casado himself said in his broadcast: "The Spanish people will not lay down their arms while they have no guarantee of a peace without crimes."

"Peace with honour", a "peace without crimes" – such were the watchwords of those who were about to hand over the people unconditionally to its executioners.

Struggle in Madrid

The people of Madrid heard the news of the Casado uprising in grim silence.

In contrast, Franco's headquarters gave vent to an outburst of rejoicing. Madrid, the heroic and impregnable capital, against whose walls all the fascist attacks had been shattered, was going to fall without a shot being fired.

Franco's representative in Paris, Quñones de León, told the United States Ambassador, William Bullitt, that in his opinion the Junta, after purely formal negotiations, would "rapidly hand over power to Franco".

The *Giornale d'Italia* went into greater detail:

"It seems that Colonel Casado has been in contact with Franco for some time in order to discuss the terms of surrender. From the first moment, Franco let him know that he would accept nothing less than complete and unconditional surrender."

The formation of the Junta of surrender marked the beginning of a frenzied hunting down of Communists. Casado issued orders to break into the Party's premises and arrest its leading members at all levels. Communist commanders and commissars were removed from their posts. During the brief and shameful reign of the capitulators, 12,000 Communists were thrown into prison; many of them were later handed over to Franco.

Naturally the Communists reacted vigorously against the Junta. In Madrid, the Party organisation, aided by the commanders of military units which were holding the front lines nearest the capital, hastened to make a stand against the traitors.

On March 6, the ringleaders of the Junta were in a critical position. Troops who were loyal to the Negrin government were already in the Plaza de Cibeles, five minutes' march from the old building of the Ministry of Finance, where Besteiro, Casado and their henchmen were crouching pale and trembling in the cellars, fearing that the end of their venture was at hand.

Until that moment Franco had been waiting expectantly. He now resolved to ease the difficult situation of the Casado gang by starting an attack on the Carabanchel front. Casado immediately took advantage of this to propose to the Communists that a truce be called in order to resist the fascist attack.

The Communists naturally accepted. Their entire struggle had been inspired by the desire to prevent surrender and the collapse of the resistance. Indeed, a Communist Party delegation proposed to the Junta a cease fire in order to avoid further fratricidal bloodshed, if the Junta for its part would stop the persecution of Communists and continue the policy of resistance.

Casado, however, only wanted a truce so as to gain time.

And while Communist-led units at the front were repelling the fascist attack, Casado ordered the Anarchist Mera to withdraw the 14th Division from the Guadalajara front to fight the Communists in the streets of Madrid. The Junta did not keep its promise to release the arrested Communists. On Wednesday, March 8, armed struggle broke out once more in the streets of the capital. But now the Junta had consolidated its position.

On Thursday, March 9, the Communist Party once again approached Casado with proposals for an agreement to stop the fighting. The Junta did not reply.

On Saturday, March 11, the Party made its third proposal for a cease-fire. This time the Junta accepted. It was agreed that both sides would lay down their arms, that the military units would be returned to their original positions, that those arrested by both sides would be set free, and that there would be no reprisals.

The Communist Party issued a new manifesto, explaining its position to the people:

"We Communists", it stated, "ardently desire peace, but it must be a peace which will ensure that we can continue to be Spaniards within the territorial integrity of our country; a peace in which the defenders of our independence will not be persecuted and exterminated like wild beasts.

"We have been, we are, and we shall be the enemies of all who cravenly try to hand over, without a struggle and unconditionally, the million brave soldiers we have under arms, and our fellow-countrymen, exhausted by the war but still possessing the spirit and courage to bring it to an end with dignity."

Neither Peace nor Honour

Notwithstanding the promises made by Casado and his confederates, the persecution continued.

It is true that some Communists were released at the beginning, but others remained in prison, or were re-arrested later and eventually handed over to Franco.

Among those splendid fighters were Domingo Girón, Ascanio, Cazorla, Mesón, and many more.

The Commander of the First Army Corps, Barcelo, and the Commissar Conesa were shot on Casado's orders. Dozens of Communists were put to death without trial.

The traitors were anxious to prove to Franco and the foreign imperialists that they were zealous anti-communists. At about that time Quiñones de León, Franco's representative in Paris, confided to a fellow-diplomat: "General Franco is delighted with the behaviour of the Madrid Junta towards the communists, because this relieves him of a serious worry even before the Madrid-Valencia zone is occupied."

But following on the persecution, imprisonment and murder of Communists, the time came to keep the promise of "peace with honour". It was then that the horrifying consequences of the Junta's activities became clear.

Until the Casado *coup* the possibility of resisting had not been destroyed. But the uprising against the government, the government's flight, the desertion of the fleet, the rupture of the unity of the working class and the People's Front, the frenzied way in which the capitulators spread defeatism and demoralisation – all this had plunged a dagger into the heart of the people's resistance, which collapsed in a terrible death agony.

For the Republic, the war had been finally lost.

The vile anti-communism of the Junta, however, did not do anything to soften the hearts of the fascist executioners. On the contrary, it encouraged them to launch a bloody reign of terror against the Spanish democrats of all persuasions. Anti-communism turned out to be a weapon that operated solely in the interests of fascism and imperialism.

Casado, Besteiro, Mera and the rest had broken the morale and magnificent unity of the people solely for the benefit of Franco and the reactionaries. For the benefit of Franco they had smashed the resistance. On Franco's behalf they had

kindled fratricidal hatred among those who for three years had fought as brothers, shedding their blood side by side with no thought of self.

When the traitors had finished their criminal work, Franco presented them with the ultimatum: "Unconditional surrender".

Then, those who had raised the cry "Either we shall be saved or we shall all go down together", abandoned the people, left them to go down, and escaped on a British ship. Only Besteiro stayed behind; the old reformist leader still put his trust in Franco's humanitarianism.

In those tragic circumstances the Communist Party concentrated its efforts on saving the largest possible number of anti-fascist fighters and comrades.

Thanks to the generosity and solidarity of international friends of Spanish democracy it was possible to get some thousands of anti-fascists away by sea, although the lack of ships was truly tragic.

On Tuesday, March 28, 1939, at 11 a. m. the fascist troops entered Madrid. During the afternoon, the Italian divisions entered by the Toledo Gate. There was no one to welcome them with silver trumpets and laurel wreaths, for Madrid had been defeated, not in a fair fight, but by the vilest treachery.

On March 30, the whole of Spain was occupied by the fascist troops.

The war was over. But for Spain there came the terrible peace of the scaffold, the firing-squads at dawn, the inquisitorial tortures, the ruthless extermination of Communists – yes, and Socialists, Anarchists and Republicans as well.

Torrents of blood extinguished the beacon of heroism that had burned so brightly for two years and eight months, illuminating the world and forging the spirit of resistance among the peoples.

With the death of the Republic of the People's Front, the fascist aggressors were free to set out on the paths of war. Already on March 15, when the end of the Republic was a matter of days, Hitler seized the whole of Czechoslovakia.

On March 23 he occupied Memel. On April 7, Mussolini attacked Albania. On September 1, the Second World War began...

Only five months had gone by since the end of the Spanish War.

The French and British peoples reaped the bitter harvest of the senseless policy their governments had followed in relation to the Spanish Republic.

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Once the Republic had been defeated, Spain's financial and landowning oligarchy set up a bloody fascist dictatorship, headed by General Franco. An avalanche of terror and vile propaganda was unleashed against the defenders of the Republic and the political ideas and social aspirations they represented.

Yet all the efforts to falsify history have failed.

The national revolutionary war of the Spanish people is already one of the great epics of the peoples.

Those were 986 days of armed struggle against Spanish fascism and reaction against the armed intervention of Hitler and Mussolini, in the course of which the Spanish people were able to build a great army out of nothing; they were 986 days devoted to the building of a new State and a new life in the midst of the terrible turmoil of war and intense ideological struggle; 986 days of struggle for the unity of the working class and the whole people, a unity which brought about the miracle of that resistance which was only broken when unity itself was shattered.

A deep mark has been left on the soul the Spanish people by those heroic years, in which they endured terrible losses and sacrifices in order to defend their dignity and their life, and shape their own history.

The rich store of revolutionary experience, gathered together and passed on to the younger generations, has been preserved and acts as a material force on the great struggle for democracy and peace.

It was in Spain that the fascist aggressors tried out the

military weapons which they later used on a big scale against other peoples throughout the Second World War. Yet it was also in Spain that democracy tried out its political weapons against fascist attack. Spain was a great school of resistance and anti-fascist unity.

How has it come about that the Spanish people, the first to stand up to fascism, still remain under the yoke of Franco's dictatorship?

The answer must be sought mainly in the part which international imperialism has played in the Spanish tragedy.

Whereas in 1939 the financial and landowning oligarchy was able to drown Spanish democracy in blood thanks to the armed intervention of the German and Italian imperialists and the diplomatic intervention of the French and British imperialists, today that oligarchy maintains its terrorist dictatorship thanks to the financial, military and diplomatic assistance of international imperialism, and above all of United States imperialism, the gendarme for reaction throughout the world.

The imperialist policy of aid to Franco was disastrous for the French and British people in the 'thirties, and is still disastrous in the 'sixties.

For world democracy it is a debt of honour to help the Spanish people to free the political prisoners who have been kept in gaol since the end of that war; to help the Spanish people in their struggle against Franco's dictatorship which is propped up by world imperialism; to help them win back the liberties that were wrested from them with the aid of the bayonets, tanks and planes of Hitler and Mussolini.

Today as yesterday, the cause of the Spanish people is a universal cause.

The Spanish War of 1936–1939 is not a “battle long ago” that can be safely and comfortably forgotten. The present rulers of Spain certainly will not have it so, but still execute or hold in prison those who fought on the other side twenty-five years ago.

The majority of British people, however, still see Spain as the first fight against fascism, as a tragic prelude (and for the “non-interventionists” a shameful one) to the Second World War.

But our memories are often vague and faulty, and our command of facts weak when it comes to events in 1936. This Republican account of the war in Spain will be most welcome to many readers, both for its factual information and for its spirit.

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